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THE

MAKING OF ISRAEL

FROM JOSEPH TO JOSHUA.

BY

JOHN C. COOPER, SCOTT, B.A.

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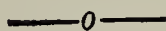
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THE MAKING OF ISRAEL.



CHAPTER I.

THE CHOSEN FAMILY TRANSPLANTED.

§ I. INTRODUCTION (Acts vii. 5-7 ; Heb. xi. 13-16). — Of the three parts of God's promise to Abraham—the Land, the Seed, and the Blessing (Gen. xii. 1-3 ; xvii. 1-8)—only two had found fulfilment in his lifetime. And the fulfilment of them had been only partial and incomplete. The "Seed" had been given to Abraham in Isaac, but the promise of "nations" that should call him father, was still to be realised in the future. God had blessed Abraham, but how he was to be made a blessing to all the families of the earth, remained still to be revealed. Of the Land, however, which God had promised to him, and to his seed after him, he possessed nothing—"no, not so much as to set his foot on." Abraham therefore was one of those who died, as he had lived, "in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off."

He understood, before he died, that what he had

actually received was but an earnest of his inheritance ; that the promise in all its parts would find fulfilment only after a long interval, and after many strange experiences of his descendants (Gen. xv. 13-16). We are to study that interval at the end of which Abraham's family had become a People, and those experiences through which it became a Nation. It was the Making of Israel. It involved the Creation of Israel as a Nation, their discipline through suffering, and their training in the knowledge of God.

§ 2. THE PURPOSE OF GOD (Gen. xv. 13, 14 ; xlv. 3, 4 ; Deut. xxvi. 5).—We can see now the necessity of the interval, the meaning and value of the experience. God gives men conquest by making them fit to conquer. He meant to give Abraham's descendants possession of Canaan. But the family of Abraham was not fit, nor could it grow fit within the land itself. The little family was planted in the midst of the Canaanites, who were morally and religiously inferior, but in every other point, in numbers, organisation, and skill in warfare, their superiors. Had they remained in Canaan, Abraham's descendants would have been suffered to increase only up to the point when they ceased to be insignificant. Then they would have been either destroyed or absorbed by the Canaanites. They required room and opportunity to grow into a People, instructed in the arts and methods of civilised life. A nomad family was to become a conquering race ; they required the welding of discipline. In achieving these purposes God allowed four centuries to elapse ! He permitted and pro-

vided the sojourn and bondage in Egypt, the wanderings and the discipline of the desert.

§ 3. THE CHOSEN FAMILY (Gal. iv. 22-31; Gen. xxxvii. 1-3). For three generations the chosen family was confined to a single thread. Abraham had one "Son of Promise," Isaac. Isaac had two sons, one of whom "despised his birthright." The knowledge of the Most High God, the sense of being set apart for a high and beneficent destiny, the hope of a great future, which formed the spiritual inheritance of the family, passed from Abraham to Isaac, and from Isaac to Jacob.

In Jacob's children the family for the first time widened, and gave promise of that extraordinary power of increase which afterwards distinguished the race. But still the graces and the qualities which are associated with God's favour, showed themselves almost exclusively in one of Jacob's sons. Joseph, the youngest but one of the twelve, was the spiritual heir. Of the elder brothers, some were sons of Leah's treacherous marriage; others had slaves for their mothers; and all betrayed the inferiority of their characters in their coarseness, cruelty, and meanness. Jacob's partiality for Joseph found its explanation not only in the fact that he was the late-born child of his favourite wife, but in the boy's own character. He combined in himself the best qualities of his ancestors. He had the religious disposition and dependence upon God of Abraham, the grave tenacity and tranquillity of Isaac, the skill, foresight, and diplomacy of Jacob. In the union of these qualities there was a great charm which accompanied Joseph through life, and

secured for him the affection and confidence of men. He was the one chosen out of the chosen family to carry out the purpose of God.

§ 4. JOSEPH AND HIS BRETHREN (Gen. xxxvii.).—In carrying out His plan of salvation God often requires the sacrifice and the suffering of the individual. He may be, and often is, unconscious of the great end for which he suffers. But if, through faith in God, he bears his fate with meekness and with cheerfulness, he becomes a voluntary instrument in God's hand, and shares in the glory which follows. God required Joseph, and he suffered.

The partiality of Jacob for his favourite son was foolishly displayed, and exposed Joseph to the envy and dislike of his brethren. The gulf between them was widened by his own consciousness of superiority, and his expectation of a brilliant future, which were reflected in his dreams. The estrangement grew into hatred, and the hatred soon found an opportunity to display itself. When Joseph was about seventeen years of age, he was sent by his father to join his brethren, who were shepherding the family flocks in Dothan, at a considerable distance from their home. The brethren, seeing him coming, "conspired against him to slay him." The eldest son, Reuben, however, interfered to save the lad from being killed, and themselves from the crime of murder. At his suggestion, Joseph was caught, stripped of his coat of many colours (or, long garment with sleeves, as the Revised Version gives it in the margin), and dropped into a neighbouring pit or subterranean cistern, from which

there could be no possibility of escape. Reuben's own intention was, no doubt, to take an opportunity of his brethren's absence from the place, and to enable Joseph to escape. He played the dangerous game of consenting to wickedness in the hope of averting its consequences.

But his plan failed. Dothan was on one of the great caravan routes from Damascus to Egypt, and one of the companies of merchantmen happened to pass that day. Judah, who shared Reuben's reluctance to slay his brother, proposed to sell him to these Midianite merchants as a slave. Accordingly, Joseph was drawn up out of the pit and sold to the Midianites for twenty pieces of silver. The brethren took the princely dress which had roused their envy against Joseph, and having smeared it with blood, carried it to their father, accounting for his son's disappearance by the suggestion that he had been torn to pieces by some wild beast.

§ 5. JOSEPH TAKEN TO EGYPT (Gen. xxxix. 1-5).—The Midianites carried Joseph with them from Canaan into Egypt. Then they sold him to be a slave to one Potiphar, an official at the royal court, and captain of the king's body guard. Joseph was sent by the Providence of God to pave the way for the migration of his family, and to secure for them a friendly reception in Egypt, and opportunity for increase and development. There was, however, still no sign for Joseph of this meaning for his affliction. He was a stranger in a strange land, a friendless outcast, and a slave. But "the Lord was with him." God gave him favour with Potiphar, who made him one of his household servants, and

there he prospered in all he undertook. Accepting his lot with cheerfulness and patience, he commended himself in his master's sight. As Potiphar's confidence in him increased, he gave him more and more liberty and responsibility, until at last he made him overseer of his household; and "the Lord blessed the Egyptian's house for Joseph's sake." Joseph rose to the highest place in his master's service, but he was still a slave.

§ 6. THE LAND OF EGYPT (*cf.* Is. xix.; Jer. xlvi.; Ezek. xxix.-xxxii.).—The land of Egypt is both physically and historically the most interesting of all lands. The oblong section of North-Eastern Africa, which represents Egypt on the map, covers a much larger area than is either inhabited or habitable. The habitable and cultivated part of Egypt consists of Upper Egypt, the valley of the Nile, and Lower Egypt, the Delta. Like Chaldæa, out of which Abraham had been called, Lower Egypt, whither his grandson was now sent, is the creation of a mighty river, and Upper Egypt hardly less so. Both still depend on the Nile for moisture and annual renewal of fertilizing power. Egypt, which but for the Nile would be part of the great African desert, is a land without mist, or clouds, or rain. Rain falls there once or twice in a century, and brings only terror and destruction. The land has to look for moisture, therefore, solely to the river, which, swelled by melting snow on the mountains of the south, rises many feet, overflows its banks, and spreads its fertilizing waters for several miles on either side. Retreating again, it leaves the land refreshed, and also a deposit of fresh soil,

which accumulates at the rate of about five inches in a century.

Beyond the limits of the annual inundation Egypt has nothing but sandy wastes, burning limestone cliffs, and undulating stretches of desert. To a traveller coming from east or west Upper Egypt would appear as a narrow riband of green winding between waste deserts of rock and sand.

In Lower Egypt, or the Delta, the river, branching into several channels, embraces and irrigates a much wider area; and the prospect before a traveller from the desert would be so much the more striking. It became, in fact, proverbial for its beauty and its sudden splendour. In describing the richness and beauty of the land round about Sodom, the writer of Genesis compared it to "the land of Egypt as thou comest unto Zoar" (Gen. xiii. 10).

Everywhere, however, there is a ceaseless struggle between the river and the desert. Where the river comes, there is life. Where the sand prevails, there is death. It is a land of light and of sunshine, of plenty and, it might be, of ease. But just across a very near border the sun becomes a consuming fire—fertility is exchanged for barrenness, life for death. Egypt is a perpetual picture of the spiritual life, ever threatened with the overwhelming drift of death, but fed and sustained from secret sources by the mystic river of life.

The valleys of the Nile and of the Euphrates were the two cradles of earliest civilisation, the seats of the earliest empires. Throughout the period of Old Testament history, the powers which ruled from these two centres were constantly in contact, and

often in collision, with each other. According as one or the other preponderated, it swayed and sometimes controlled the politics of Palestine. Hence comes the prominence which is given to Egypt in the prophets of the Old Testament, and the familiarity which they show with the character of both the land and its people. Over against the theocratic ideal of government according to the will of God, Egypt continually represents human ambition, human wisdom, trust in human help. As champions of a pure worship, spiritual religion, and dependence on God alone, the Hebrew prophets had to wage incessant war against the influence of Egypt, its policy, its bribes, and its threats. Egypt was to the Israelite seeking to walk humbly with his God what "the world" is to the Christian. But in its ultimate overthrow it became also the type of the victory of the people of God over the world.

§ 7. JOSEPH IN PRISON (Gen. xxxix. 7-23; xl.).—Into this strange land God purposed to bring His chosen people, and had now brought Joseph to prepare the way before them. As a slave in the house of Potiphar, he had risen to as high a position as a slave could reach. But he was yet once more to be cast down, and to sink to even lower depths of helplessness, in order that the exaltation which was to follow, might be seen beyond all doubt to be the work of God. The wife of his master Potiphar, having failed to tempt him to sin, accused him of the very wickedness he had spurned. Overwhelmed by malicious misrepresentation, and by this groundless accusation of treachery against his master, Joseph offered no defence and suffered

in silence. He was hurled from his position of trust in Potiphar's household, and flung into prison.

Even in this, the lowest ebb of his fortunes, Joseph continued to show the cheerfulness and equanimity of a mind which is stayed on God. He commended himself now to the gaoler, as formerly to Potiphar ; and even in the prison rose to a position of trust. He showed also a heart sufficiently at leisure from itself to enter sympathetically into the anxieties and perplexities of his fellow-prisoners. This disposition became, under God, the cause of his liberation and marvellous rise to supreme power. His own bitter experience had not led him either to despise the dreams of his own youth, or to distrust the possibility of God's thus indicating His purpose. When the High Steward and the Chamberlain of Pharaoh's household, who shared his imprisonment, were troubled by what they had dreamt, Joseph boldly interpreted for them, and the interpretation being justified by events, he saw his two companions removed from the prison—the one to be executed, the other to be restored to the confidence of Pharaoh.

§ 8. JOSEPH'S EXALTATION (Gen. xli.).—Joseph waited long, in the hope that the Chief Butler would remember his friend in the prison, and intercede on his behalf. He waited full two years, long enough to incur the bitter certainty that he was forgotten. By God, however, he was neither forgotten nor forsaken. The dreams of Pharaoh, which all the astrologers and magicians of Egypt failed to interpret, recalled Joseph to the memory of the Chief Butler, and proved the occasion of his

deliverance. Summoned from prison at the bidding of Pharaoh, Joseph effectually commended himself to the king by the promptitude and intelligence with which he interpreted his dreams. Being further asked for his advice in view of the national crisis which he predicted, Joseph displayed such sagacity and statesmanship that Pharaoh joyfully accepted his proposals ; and, rightly judging that there was no one more capable of carrying them into execution than the man who had devised them, he entrusted Joseph with the government of the whole of Egypt. Joseph was at once invested with the dignity and decorations of the highest rank. Pharaoh bestowed upon him a new name or title, and a wife, who was the daughter of the high-priest at Heliopolis. Joseph became Governor of Egypt, second only to Pharaoh, when he was still only thirty years of age.

Thus Joseph passed at a bound from slavery and the oblivion of a prison to freedom, fame, and vast authority. The ultimate purpose of God in his exaltation was not yet revealed ; but, looking back to his boyhood, he must have recognised that nothing but the hand of God had led him : through suffering, humiliation, and persecution, borne with meekness and cheerfulness, the Hebrew exile had been raised to be the Vizier or Prime Minister of Egypt.

§ 9. JOSEPH'S BRETHREN VISIT EGYPT (Gen. xlii.-xlv.).—One stage of the preparation for Israel's sojourn in Egypt being thus complete, the next was ready to be unfolded. The terrible and prolonged dearth which Joseph had predicted took place. An inscription, which has recently been dis-

covered in one of the tombs at El-Kab, describes a famine of similar duration and severity, which there is reason to identify with the famine in the time of Joseph.* The famine was not confined, however, to Egypt, but extended to the neighbouring countries. Amongst others, it pressed sorely on the inhabitants of Canaan, and the family of Jacob. News coming that there was abundance of corn in Egypt, Jacob sent ten of his sons to buy for the necessities of the family, retaining only Benjamin, his youngest. Joseph's boyish dreams were fulfilled when he saw his brethren ushered into his presence as suppliants for his help. In his heart he must have marvelled at the ways of God, as the men bowed before him not knowing who he was. He would fain have made himself known at once, and obtained news of his father. But the fact of their former cruelty and wickedness stood between him and them. Were they still men of the same temper and disposition, or had years and suffering brought them to repentance? To find this out, Joseph put them to various tests. He dealt roughly with them, perplexed them with fear, and especially with the demand that they should return and bring Benjamin, their youngest brother. By such means he brought them to the point of acknowledging to one another their former guilt (Gen. xlii. 21). They returned home to their father, laden with provisions, but humbled and repentant.

The famine continuing, it became necessary to make a second journey to Egypt. But the brethren knew that it was hopeless to appear a second time

* See Brugsch, "Egypt under the Pharaohs," i. p. 261 ff.

before Joseph without Benjamin ; and they found it almost impossible to persuade Jacob to let Benjamin go. Reuben offered his two sons in pledge ; Judah offered himself as surety for Benjamin. At last Jacob yielded, and Joseph, seeing again his brother Benjamin, and knowing something of what his coming involved, had the assurance that in his brethren he saw men whose hearts were softened and changed. He could no longer restrain himself ; there was no longer any need. Dismissing all his Egyptian attendants, he stood alone before them, and made known to them that he was Joseph, their brother. They were startled and alarmed, as they remembered how little cause Joseph had to look on them with favour ; but he did not even upbraid them with their former cruelty. He comforted their fears by pointing to the true purpose and the real Author of the experience that had befallen him. "It was not you that sent me hither, but God. God sent me before you to save your lives by a great deliverance."

§ 10. JACOB'S REMOVAL TO EGYPT (Gen. xlv. 16—xlv. 7).—The way was now clear for the transfer of the chosen family to Egypt. They were secure of protection, and of opportunity to increase and multiply. At Joseph's suggestion, his brethren carried back to Canaan an invitation from Pharaoh to Jacob to come and settle in Egypt. So they returned again, laden with their brother's bounty, and provided with waggons for the removal of their father and his household.

The way was not so clear for Jacob. To go to Egypt meant to give up Canaan, where God had

given to him a larger holding in the Promised Land than He had given either to Abraham, or to Isaac. Both his affection and his faith clung to that part of his inheritance: even the prospect of re-union to Joseph could hardly reconcile him to abandoning his hold upon Canaan. God appears to have recognized His servant's perplexity; He vouchsafed to him at this time a new revelation and a new promise. He drew near to Jacob at Beersheba, and encouraged him to go down into Egypt. "I will go down with thee into Egypt." He revealed to him the hidden purpose for which one part of the three-fold promise, though partially fulfilled, must now be surrendered. It was in order that another of its parts might be yet more richly fulfilled. "Fear not to go down into Egypt; for I will there make of thee a great nation." So Jacob quitted Canaan in obedience to God's command, and with his whole family went down into Egypt.

The family of Israel was by this time a not inconsiderable body of people. Abraham, at the invasion of Chedorlaomer, had quickly raised three hundred men, all belonging to his own household. Jacob's household consisted probably of at least as many—with their wives and children, say, a thousand souls. And each of his sons who had reached middle life, would be head of a similar household. The list given in Genesis xlv. contains only the names of Jacob's direct descendants, and does not include them all. Round these many others would be grouped; so that the movement headed by Jacob would involve the migration of three or four thousand people, with their flocks and their cattle,

their tents, and their furnishings, and "all that they had."

§ II. EARLY HISTORY OF EGYPT.—There was probably a reason in the history of Egypt which had favoured the exaltation of Joseph, and now explained the welcome offered to the Israelites. The actual dates of these events cannot be fixed with certainty, but the date of the migration may be taken approximately as 1730 B.C. This was a time at which the government of Egypt was in the hands of a people likely to be peculiarly favourable to such an immigration.

Egypt had already at that time a history stretching back for more than three thousand years. It is true that of the history of that long period little has come down to us beyond the names of the kings and their several capitals, and the duration of their reigns. No fewer than fourteen dynasties are recorded as having ruled in Egypt before the time of Joseph. The earliest of these have left no monumental or other remains which have as yet been identified. But later tradition is confident in ascribing the foundation of the Egyptian monarchy to Menes, the builder of Memphis, on the opposite bank of the Nile from modern Cairo. If the names and dates of his successors be truly given by the chronicler, he must have ruled about 4700 B.C. From the period of the third dynasty we have contemporary seals (scarabs) and statues; from the fourth dynasty tombs, inscribed tablets, and pyramids. These take us back with certainty to two thousand years before Joseph.

From the fourth dynasty (about B.C. 4000) on-

ward, we have an ever increasing number of monuments and inscriptions, statues and temples, which represent some of the greatest figures in Egyptian history, or record their deeds. The pyramid of Cheops which overlooks Cairo to-day, had been standing already nearly 2000 years when Abraham visited Egypt. The lonely and mysterious Sphinx has looked down upon countless generations of men. The tombs have lately been made to yield up the very bodies that were entrusted to them 4000 years ago; and it is possible now to look on the very features of the Pharaoh who oppressed the Israelites.

§ 12. THE HYKSOS.—For two thousand years, and throughout the reigns of twelve or thirteen dynasties, the kings of Egypt were representatives of the native aristocracy. But after that there followed a period of about five hundred years during which the native monarchy was first rivalled and then ousted by an invading and conquering people. This alien race, whose presence disturbed the course of Egyptian history, were known as the Hyksos, or the “Shepherd Princes.” They were probably of Semitic origin and nomad habits, and forced their way into Egypt from the East. “There came up from the East,” says the Egyptian chronicler, “in a strange manner, men of an ignoble race, who had the confidence to invade our country and easily subdued it by their power, without a battle. And when they had her rulers in their hands, they burned our cities, and demolished the temples of the gods, and inflicted every kind of barbarity upon the inhabitants, slaying some, and reducing the wives and children of others to a state

of slavery." "All this nation was styled Hyksos, that is, Shepherd Kings ; for the first syllable, *Hyk*, in the sacred dialect denotes a king, and *sos* signifies a shepherd. Some say they were Arabians. This people who were thus denominated Shepherd Kings, and their descendants, retained possession of Egypt during the period of five hundred and eleven years." *

This invasion began, probably, not long before the birth of Abraham, by a long-continued series of incursions from the Syrian deserts. After a century of struggle, the Hyksos established themselves as the dominant power in Egypt. Their kings occupied the throne, the Egyptians were their vassals. It is with one of these kings of foreign birth, possibly one named Apepi, that we must identify the "Pharaoh" of Joseph's times. And we may recognize in the presence and supremacy in Egypt of a people of more directly Semitic origin an explanation of the position acquired by Joseph, and of the welcome offered to the family of Israel. The newcomers would be not distantly related in race and language to the then rulers of Egypt. When they arrived, Joseph instructed them to announce themselves as shepherds. To the native Egyptians, shepherds—*i.e.*, nomads—were an abomination ; they represented the detested invaders and conquerors. But to the Hyksos themselves, to be a shepherd or nomad tribe constituted both a recommendation and a claim on their protection.

§ 13. ISRAEL SETTLED IN GOSHEN (Gen. xlv. 28—xlvii. 12).—The seat of the Hyksos mon-

* See Flinders Petrie, "History of Egypt," p. 233 *f*.

archy was at Memphis, from which point it controlled both Upper and Lower Egypt; but the Hyksos population was chiefly settled in the N.E. province of Egypt, between the Lower Nile and the eastern frontier. It was in the same part of his kingdom that the Hyksos Pharaoh assigned a settlement to the family of Israel.

The position of Goshen has lately been identified with considerable certainty. The translations of the Old Testament which were made in Egypt, render the word Goshen in the book of Genesis by "Gesem," or "Kesem of Arabia," "Arabia" signifying the eastern province of Egypt, in which Goshen is to be looked for. In Gen. xlv. 28, one of these same translations (which were made by men who knew the geography of the country) gives for "Goshen," "Heroöpolis in the land of Ramses"; another "Near Pithom, the city in the land of Ramses." Goshen therefore is to be looked for in the neighbourhood of these places. The ancient sites of Heroöpolis and Pithom have recently been discovered; and scholars think that they have found the original Goshen in a site not far distant which bore the name of Phacusa in Greek, corresponding to Pa-Kes in Egyptian. This site is found near the modern Zagazig, at the mouth of a narrow strip of fertile land which leads through the desert to Ismailia and the Suez Canal.

In the district round about this point, in a good and fertile land, Joseph placed his brethren, in "the best of the land, in the land of Rameses"; there the children of Israel settled down. For a long time they led peaceful and prosperous lives under

the influential protection of Joseph, increasing and multiplying with the blessing of God.

§ 14. JACOB BLESSES HIS CHILDREN (Gen. xlviii.—xlix.).—Jacob was already an old man when he came down into Egypt. He lived there seventeen years longer, and then, at the age of 147, he felt himself drawing near to death. Even in old age and exile, he cherished the promise given to himself and his fathers concerning the land of Canaan. He summoned his son Joseph to receive his dying commands. And so strong was his faith in the power of God to fulfil His Word, and in due time to put his posterity in possession of Canaan, that he laid a solemn charge upon his son not to bury him in Egypt but in Canaan, the land that was to be their future home.

His next desire was to stamp for ever on the history of the chosen race the memory and recognition of what Joseph had done for the family. And this he did by adopting Joseph's two boys, his own grandsons, to the position of sons. He gave Ephraim and Manasseh equality with the brethren of Joseph as heads of tribes in Israel, and thus he gave to Joseph, through his sons, a double portion of inheritance. With a prophetic anticipation of their future relation, Jacob insisted on giving a "*right hand*" blessing to the younger grandson Ephraim. This anticipation was afterwards justified when the descendants of Ephraim acquired a leading position among the tribes of Israel.

Having thus acknowledged the peculiar claims of Joseph, Jacob sent for his other sons. In the part-

ing "Blessings" recorded in Gen. xlix. we see the future destiny of each of the tribes foreshadowed by the patriarch's anticipations. That destiny was not in all cases a happy one, for destiny corresponds to a large extent with character ; and the characters of some of Jacob's sons becoming in some measure the characteristics of their several tribes, were such as to foreshadow not success but failure. In Reuben, impetuosity and want of self-control, such as had been already exhibited, would lead to insignificance and decrepitude. Simeon and Levi, stained with cruelty and lust, would cease to hold a position of their own, and be "scattered among the tribes of Israel." On the other hand, Judah's royal qualities were to lead to royal dominion over his brethren ; his tribe should be the centre and the governor of the chosen people "till Shiloh come." To others of his sons, Jacob foretold the character of their destined home, or the position of their descendants in the commonwealth of Israel. The richest promises and the most abiding blessing Jacob gathered upon the head of Joseph—"on the crown of the head of him that was separate from his brethren."

§ 15. JACOB'S DEATH AND BURIAL (Gen. xlix. 33—l. 13).—When he had made an end of commanding his sons, Jacob "yielded up the ghost, and was gathered unto his people." He is represented in his biography as a man of true piety and firm trust in God ; a man whose originally coarse and selfish nature was gradually refined and purified by discipline, by struggle, and by waiting upon God. The turning point of his life and character is to be found in his experience at

Mahanaim, his wrestling till dawn with an invisible adversary. He learned there to know man's power with God, the prevailing power of faith and prayer. He learnt also the power of God over man; the power that blesses while it maims; that takes, in order to restore a thousand-fold.

In fulfilment of his solemn injunction, Joseph and his brethren conveyed the body of their father to the land of Canaan for burial. The journey was made amid the sincere mourning of his children and dependents, and many tokens of the sympathetic interest of the Egyptians. They buried Jacob at Hebron, in the cave of the field of Machpelah, beside Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebekah, and Leah his wife. The tradition of that sanctuary of the dead in the land of their fathers would keep alive in the later generations of Israel the memory of the promise and the hope of return.

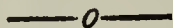
§ 16. JOSEPH'S DEATH: HIS CHARACTER (Gen. l. 19-26).—Joseph lived for seventy years after the death of his father, but there is nothing further recorded to throw light on his life or experience. Only we are told that the removal of Jacob did not make any difference in Joseph's treatment of his brethren. Their not unnatural fear that such might be the case was quickly dissipated. He continued to afford them kindness and protection. He had truly forgotten that they had been the human instruments of his suffering, and with pious humility recognised only the hand of God in the bitter experience of his early days. He lived to the age of 110, and saw in the grandchildren of his

two sons the pledge of an assured future for his race.

But even for Joseph the hope of that future lay not in Egypt, but in the land which God had promised to his forefathers. His dying words to his family expressed the deep conviction that God would bring them out of that land "to the land which He swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob." Joseph therefore forbade them to bury him in Egypt, and directed that his body, having been embalmed, should be kept and carried up with the returning people to the land of their inheritance.

This act of faith on the part of Joseph (*cf.* Heb. xi. 22) serves to illuminate the hidden springs of his character. Outwardly his chief characteristic was a certain charm, which continually won for him the affection and confidence of other men. Jacob, Potiphar, the Egyptian gaoler, Pharaoh and his court, all testify to its reality. The inner qualities from which this charm proceeded can be traced in the biography. Joseph displays at every point buoyancy, unselfishness, fidelity, and sagacity. We must also notice the tenacity with which through life he clung to those ideals of the future which swam before him in his dreams. He was the victim neither of disappointment nor of despair. The charge concerning his bones reveals the foundation of his character in the fact that Joseph had entered into the spiritual inheritance of his father, that he valued and claimed the Promise which rested on the relation between God and Israel. One or two slight indications elsewhere confirm the conclusion that this character of great attractiveness and

marked ability was based on faith in God. He also was of those who "endured as seeing Him who is invisible."



CHAPTER II.

THE BONDAGE OF ISRAEL.

§ 17. THE CHRONOLOGY OF ISRAEL'S SOJOURN IN EGYPT.—In the vision of Abraham recorded in Gen. xv. 13, it was made known to him that his seed should be a "stranger in a land that is not theirs," and that they should be "afflicted" four hundred years (*cf.* Acts vii. 6). In Exodus xii. 10 (A.V.) the period of Israel's sojourn in Egypt is given as four hundred and thirty years. But some manuscripts and translations add words which make the same number of years to cover a sojourn in Canaan as well as Egypt. In Galatians iii. 17, S. Paul appears to reckon these four hundred and thirty years as covering the whole period from the covenant with Abraham to the giving of the Law. Josephus in one passage reckons these four hundred and thirty years from Abraham's coming to Canaan to the Exodus.

It is clear that this last reckoning allows altogether too short a time for a sojourn during which the people increased from, say, three thousand to two millions. A growth such as this would seem to require at least the full period of four centuries. On the other hand, from the genealogy given in Ex. vi. 16-20, Moses appears to have been the great-

grandson of Levi ; and if this table is to be taken as complete, there would not be room for more than two hundred and fifty years between the immigration of Jacob and the Exodus. But there is reason to suppose that these genealogical tables not infrequently pass over one or more generations. The evidence does not permit a certain conclusion to be drawn ; but, on the whole, it seems probable that a period of four centuries elapsed between the coming of Jacob and the departure of the children of Israel.

Correspondences between the Hebrew and the Egyptian chronology at this early period are so uncertain, that the latter affords no sure assistance here. But there are indications which justify us in fixing the sojourn of Israel in Egypt approximately in the four centuries from 1750 to 1350 B.C.

For the greater part of this period the history of Israel is an entire blank. From the death of Joseph to the birth of Moses there is no recorded event or change. Only the history of Egypt, and the condition in which we find the children of Israel when the long silence is broken, enable us to conjecture their experiences during the interval.

§ 18. **CONDITION OF THE PEOPLE : PROSPERITY.** — The sojourn divides itself into three periods, marked by very different conditions. The first of these extends over eighty or ninety years—from the occupation of Goshen to the death of Joseph. The Hyksos were still in power ; Joseph's influence would survive his active service of the State ; his fame would continue to secure freedom and favour for his kinsfolk. Israel was left in undisturbed possession of the land of Goshen. In

that fertile alluvial plain both the people and their possessions multiplied quickly. But a significant change would pass over their habits. It is a common observation that nomad tribes, planted on the borders of a settled and civilised country, gradually pass from pastoral to agricultural pursuits. The settled parts of Palestine to-day have round them a ring of Bedáwîn tribes who are going through this process. They are partly shepherds and partly farmers. If Israel in Goshên followed this course of development we may picture them gradually acquiring the methods of agriculture and the simple arts of civilized life. Besides their stretches of pasture land, they would have gardens and irrigated fields, to which Moses afterwards referred when he reminded them of Egypt: "Where thou sowedst thy seed, and wateredst it with thy foot, as a garden of herbs."* There grew "the cucumbers, and the melons, and the leeks, and the onions, and the garlick,"† for which the people lusted in after days. Egypt was already the home of many handicrafts, such as carpentry, spinning and weaving, working in metals, pottery, and tanning and dyeing. As the people increased in numbers, those who could no longer find sustenance in shepherding or husbandry would acquire these trades; so that when they came to leave Egypt they included in their ranks skilled workers in all these arts.

§ 19. AN OMINOUS CHANGE.—This condition of freedom and prosperity changed to one of slavery and distress, which lasted with increasing severity

* Deut. xi. 10.

† Num. xi. 5.

up till the Exodus. The change was probably a gradual one, but it was ushered in by two important events. The first of these was the death of Joseph, and the consequent withdrawal of his protective influence over his people. The second was the fall of the Hyksos monarchy. The patriotic spirit of the native Egyptians had been steadily reviving and the old race had recovered a great deal of its lost influence, especially in Upper Egypt. The last of the Hyksos monarchs, Apepi, strove in vain to crush the rising national movement. His armies were defeated, and in a short time he and his people were expelled from Egypt.

The first king of the restored native dynasty was Aahmes. Whether we are to identify the "new king that knew not Joseph" with him, or, as seems more probable, with a much later king, is not a question of great importance. The situation of the Israelites must certainly have changed for the worse through his accession. Their connection with the Hyksos had not been so close as to involve them in the expulsion of the old rulers, but was yet sufficient to render them suspect in the eyes of the new. From this time forward, the memory of their shameful subjection rankled in the mind of the Egyptians, and caused them to look on all "shepherds" as an abomination. The extraordinarily rapid growth of the people of Israel would naturally lead to alarm in the minds of Egyptian statesmen. They represented the shame of the past, and a not improbable danger in the future. It is not unlikely, therefore, that soon after the

accession of the new dynasty measures would be taken to confine and repress the free development of Israel. The period of the eighteenth and nineteenth dynasties, which now began, is the most brilliant in the whole history of Egypt. During the eighteenth dynasty, which lasted for three hundred years, Thothmes I. carried Egyptian arms as far as the Euphrates ; Queen Hatasu, his daughter and successor, established commercial relations on both sides of the Red Sea ; and Thothmes III., the Egyptian Alexander the Great, reduced the whole of Syria, as far as Damascus, to his authority. This age of extensive foreign conquest, was also the age of highest achievement in arts and architecture at home. The temples of Karnak and Luxor, and many of the obelisks and statues, remain to testify to the splendours of this time.

All through this most active period of three hundred years the Israelites were dwelling in Goshen ; Egyptian armies were passing to and from their victorious campaigns in Palestine ; stupendous works of building and irrigation were being carried on in their immediate neighbourhood. Whether they had any share, either voluntary or compulsory, in these things, we cannot tell. All we know is that the promise to Jacob was fulfilled, that in these centuries Israel grew to be a great multitude. They "were fruitful and increased abundantly, and multiplied, and waxed exceeding mighty, and the land was filled with them" (Ex. i. 7).

§ 20. THE INFLUENCE OF EGYPT ON ISRAEL.—The influence of Egypt on Israel was

limited by several circumstances—*e.g.* by the situation of Goshen on the frontier, not in the heart of Egypt ; by the difference of race and language ; and, for the greater part of the sojourn, by the hostility between the two races. Its effects were, therefore, less marked than might have been expected ; nevertheless they were both real and important in departments of arts, government, and thought.

Allusion has already been made to the fact that Israel owed its introduction to many handicrafts to its Egyptian neighbours. In matters of government, the growing nation found itself surrounded by a highly-organised system of local administration, which was in part hereditary and in part bureaucratic. They would become familiar with the offices and functions of judge, land-surveyor, tax-collector and treasurer, of priest, high-priest, and household minister or “levi.” While their own organisation remained chiefly a tribal one, based on family relationship, they were yet storing impressions which explain many points in the subsequent organisation, both civil and ecclesiastical, of Israel.

It would be yet more interesting to estimate what Israel owed to Egypt in the field of ideas, and especially of religious ideas. There is no evidence of the religious ideas or practices of the people during their stay in Goshen. We may suppose that the chief material of their religious life would be found in the traditions handed down from one generation to another. They would include the lives of the Patriarchs, their knowledge of God, their experience

of His influence on their lives. They would include also the great and frequently-repeated promises made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Certain practices also handed down from their fathers would be associated more or less distinctly with these ideas, such as Sacrifice, Circumcision, and possibly the Sabbath. There is no record of men who received communication or revelation from God, of any special religious impulse during the whole period from Jacob to Moses. But as the varying experience of successive generations drove some of them to deeper reflection on life and destiny, the traditions and promises of the past would acquire more importance, and assume a closer connection with these hereditary observances ; they would express more and more the relation of the people to the God to whom they looked for deliverance.

From the Egyptians, in contact with whom they dwelt, Israel received influences both for good and evil. The Egyptian religion was founded on the recognition of an existence after death, and morality on the belief in a future judgment upon deeds done in the flesh, with corresponding retribution. On the other hand, in the external worship of Egypt there was much which impressed Israel for evil. The numberless gods, the worship offered to them in the form of graven images, the substitution of gorgeous display for spiritual worship, and the encouragement of licentious rites and dances as a part of religious ceremonial,—these all left their mark on the religious disposition of Israel, and endangered for many generations the purity of their faith and worship.

§ 21. SLAVERY AND OPPRESSION (Ex. i. 7-22).—The accession of the king who knew not Joseph is probably to be referred to a monarch near the close of the eighteenth dynasty, and about a hundred years before the Exodus. The later kings of the Thothmes dynasty had not been so successful as their predecessors. Egypt had had to withdraw from all her earlier conquests, and was now actually threatened in her turn by the rising power of the Hittites. In the event of an invasion from the side of Canaan, the province of Goshen would be the first to be reached by an enemy. It would then be a serious danger to Egypt if they should find there an independent and alien people, who might give them alliance and assistance. So reasoned the new Pharaoh and his ministers. Israel had increased sufficiently in number to make them a danger to the State, but not sufficiently to render hopeless an attempt to crush them. A policy of quiet repression during the previous period had probably curtailed their independence to a considerable extent. That policy was now exchanged for one of rigorous severity. Steps were taken to reduce the Israelites to a condition of slavery. Perpetually renewed demands for the supply of forced labour gradually drained the male population. They were engaged principally in the building of Pharaoh's great frontier garrisons, the "magazine cities of Pithom and Ramses." Recent excavations at Pithom have laid bare the vast store-houses then erected, in which the bricks are made partly with and partly without straw. Among the scenes represented on Egyptian

monuments there are several in which such labour is depicted, crowds of slaves engaged in making, carrying, and laying bricks, under the constant lash of the task-master. As the object in the case of the Israelites was not only to profit by their labour, but to reduce their numbers and their spirit, there was no limit to the cruelty with which they were treated.

These measures, severe as they were, failed nevertheless to diminish the numbers of the Israelites. Rather were the Egyptians disturbed to find that "the more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied and grew." Determined to secure his object, the Pharaoh therefore issued orders for the secret destruction of all male infants born to Hebrew women. Inasmuch as Egyptian law prohibited infanticide, such a step shows the nature of the alarm in the minds of the king and his advisers. When this order was boldly disobeyed, they went yet further, and by public proclamation commanded that every male child born among the Hebrews should be thrown into the river. The attempt was probably made to give this abominable cruelty a religious significance in connection with offerings to the god of the Nile.

To what purpose was this suffering, this prolonged agony, in many homes? It had both a moral and a spiritual result. It acted effectively in separating Israel as a people from their surroundings; it put a barrier of enmity between them and the Egyptians. Among themselves it fostered a national cohesion, through the consciousness of common trial. The iron entered into their soul, but it helped to make some of them men of iron.

In some also it must have sharpened the memory of family traditions concerning their peculiar relation to God, and the promise of a country that was one day to be their own. In Goshen God had called the young nation into being ; through helplessness and pain, it learned to look to Him for deliverance. In a situation from which only God could deliver it, it was ready to receive a revelation of the delivering power of God, which no lapse of time could obliterate.

§ 22. BIRTH OF MOSES (Exodus ii. 1-9 ; Heb. xi. 23).—The very decree which had been framed for their extermination led indirectly to the deliverance of Israel. One of the children whom it threatened with destruction, owed to it the education and equipment that qualified him to save his people. Amram and his wife Jochebed were both members of the family of Levi. At the time when this decree was enforced, they had already two children—a daughter, Miriam, and a son, Aaron. Miriam must have been eight or nine years of age, Aaron was three, when a third child, a son, was born. The natural horror of the parents at the fate which awaited him, was increased by the unusual beauty of the child. They resolved, if possible, to save him. By constant watchfulness and tender concern on the part of the whole family the boy was successfully concealed for three months. When further concealment became impossible, the mother devised a scheme to save her baby's life. One of the royal princesses was in the habit of going to a certain spot on the river to bathe. A cradle of bulrushes was woven, and made watertight with a coat-

ing of mud and pitch. In this the mother placed the child, and then left it floating among the reeds at the water's edge, for the princess to find. And so it fell out. The princess, herself perhaps a childless wife, was struck by the beauty of the boy. She guessed at once that it was one of the Hebrew children. As she was looking at it with compassion, the little Miriam, coming up, offered to call "a nurse of the Hebrew women," who might undertake to nurse it for her. The suggestion was accepted, and the boy's own mother had the joy of receiving her child from Pharaoh's daughter with a charge to bring him up for her. So the child spent the first few years of his life in security in his father's house. There he would be instructed by his parents in the history of his race, in the hopes which they cherished, and in the expectation that God would one day set them free.

§ 23. YOUTH OF MOSES : EDUCATION (Acts vii. 21, 22).—The boy remained in his father's house, probably until the age of six or seven, the age at which the education of an Egyptian boy began. When that time came, his mother took him back to the princess who had received and adopted him, and he "became her son." She gave to him the name of *Moses*, a name which would signify in Hebrew "drawn out." All that we know with certainty concerning Moses' youth and early manhood is, that till he was nearly forty years of age he lived among the noblest of the land as an adopted son of the royal house. The Jews have many traditions and legends about this period of his life, but the Scriptures are silent. Only we have now

so much information about the daily life of the Egyptians, the education, amusements, and habits of the people, that it is not difficult to picture the life of Moses. As a boy he would live in one or other of the magnificent palaces of the Pharaoh; he would have a tutor to instruct him; he would learn—and it would take him many years—to read and write the complicated picture alphabet of Egypt. He would also be taught the rules of arithmetic so far as they had been discovered; but Egyptian arithmetic was so elementary that it had no knowledge of division or fractions, and could only multiply by two. Physical training would not be neglected. Gymnastics, wrestling, and single-stick were popular. Vocal and instrumental music, the laws of harmony and rhythm formed part of the general education. Hunting and fishing were practised with great enthusiasm.

From the statement in Acts vii. 22, that “Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians,” it is probable that he completed his education as far Egypt could take him. In that case, he would carry on his studies at one of the two famous universities, possibly at Heliopolis. The course of study at these universities included the beginnings of geometry, mensuration, and astronomy, the principles of law, and of symbolism, and also what passed in Egypt for philosophy. At length, in early manhood, his education completed, Moses would return to the court to take up the career of an Egyptian noble and statesman. There is an ancient tradition, which has probably some truth in it, that he entered the military service, and after highly

distinguishing himself in the field, commanded an Egyptian army in a victorious campaign against the Ethiopians in the south. In this way he may have acquired by experience those abilities of generalship and statecraft which he afterwards displayed in leading and governing the people of Israel.

§ 24. **THE GREAT RENUNCIATION** (Ex. ii. 11-15; Acts vii. 23-28; Heb. xi. 24-26).—Whatever truth there may or may not be in the traditions of Moses' achievements as a soldier, there can be no doubt that there was a great career before him in Egypt. His relation to the royal house, his education and his ability opened prospects of the highest distinction and success. But deeply though he was immersed in the luxury and activity of the Egyptian Court, there was something which withheld him from making that life his own, some inbred disgust and dissatisfaction with the corruptions of Egypt, some ineradicable sympathy with the race from which he had sprung, some beckoning vision of the possibility of better things for them and for himself. Neither present pleasure nor brilliant prospects could efface the remembrance of his relation to the suffering bondsmen of Israel. When he had reached the age of forty, this uneasiness and this sympathy displayed themselves in a sudden resolve to visit his kinsfolk. He beheld their misery; he saw one of the Egyptian task-masters ill-treating a Hebrew; he remembered that the victim was "one of his brethren." Indignation and sympathy overcame his caution; and he avenged his countryman by killing the Egyptian. He thought that the deed had been unperceived; but an incident

on the following day proved that he had been mistaken. The matter came to the ears of the king. That Moses was not at once put to death shows the position of influence which he occupied. But such an exhibition of sympathy with the slaves of the State amounted to treason in a noble of the court. Measures were taken for the secret removal of so dangerous a character.

Moses might probably have escaped by false explanations and a final repudiation of his relation to Israel. But the incident had revealed him to himself. He now knew where his heart really was. It was not with Egypt, but with Israel. He abandoned his position as "son of Pharaoh's daughter"; he cast away his career, his opportunities and his rank. With the conditions very plain before him, he made the choice between the "pleasures of sin" and the "reproach of Christ." By faith he esteemed the latter "greater riches;" by faith he committed his future to God, and forsook Egypt, cutting himself off from all that it offered of power, riches, and fame.

§ 25. MOSES IN MIDIAN (Ex. ii. 15-22).—Fleeing from Egypt and from Pharaoh, Moses sought refuge and assistance on the east side of the Red Sea, in the peninsula of Sinai, which was called, from the tribe which occupied it, the land of Midian. The Midianites were of the same stock as Israel, being descended from Abraham by his marriage with Keturah. They were a numerous and powerful people, and possibly Moses had conceived the idea of inducing them to make an attack upon Egypt, and attempt to deliver his countrymen.

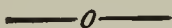
He found his way to the abode of the high-priest of Midian, who, like Melchisedek, was also the chief ruler of the people. He is commonly known by the name of Jethro, though he is first introduced as Reuel.*

Whatever may have been Moses' purpose in approaching Jethro, he found himself unable to effect anything on behalf of his oppressed brethren. The fulness of time had not yet come. Moses himself was not yet ready. The deliverance, when it came, was not to be by the hand or aid of man. Moses, who was to be the instrument of the Divine Power, had yet to undergo a long training and preparation. For forty years he was condemned to what must have been a bitter inactivity and trial to his faith. He had surrendered a position from which possibly he might have rendered help to his brethren; he had gained nothing as an equivalent. He was an outlaw and an exile, a mere shepherd, keeping the flock of Jethro. Moses was the first among many servants of God who have been prepared for great works of faith in the school of the desert by the discipline of disappointment.

He married one of Jethro's daughters; and the name which he gave to his first son, Gershom, expresses the hopelessness of his heart — "a stranger in a strange land." Moses was made to drink the cup of his renunciation to the dregs. But the name which he gave to his second son, Eliezer,

* Reuel in Ex. ii. 18-20; Raguel in Num. x. 29; Jether or Jethro in Ex. iii. 1; iv. 18; xviii. 2; in Judges iv. 11 Hobab appears as the name of Moses' "father-in-law," but in all probability the word should be translated "brother-in-law" (*cf.* Num. x. 29).

—"My God is help"—may be taken to indicate that he did not lose his hold on God, or his hope of the future.



CHAPTER III.

GOD DELIVERS HIS PEOPLE.

§ 26. THE FULNESS OF TIME (Ex. ii. 23-25).

—While Moses was being thus disciplined in the loneliness and penury of the desert, the cup of Israel's misery was becoming nearly full. The oppression which had been gradually increasing under Seti I. became intolerable in the reign of Ramses II., the Sesostris of Greek historians. The Israelites were employed by him in the building of his magnificent city of residence at Zoan or Tanis, to which he gave his own name—"City of Ramses." His reign marks the culmination of Egyptian splendour; but the splendour of the Pharaoh meant the misery of the slaves: and to Ramses in particular is given the title of the Pharaoh of the Oppression. To him succeeded Mineptah II., who was destined to be known to the Pharaoh of the Exodus. The change brought no relief to Israel. They sighed by reason of their bondage, and they cried, and their cry came up unto God. The set time had come. The period foretold to Abraham was complete. The people had multiplied until they were now in numbers, though not in character, "a great nation." Beyond

the Borders of Egypt events were ripening to admit of the passage and entrance of Israel to their inheritance. The man of God's choice was ready, waiting in the wilderness of Sinai. God looked upon the children of Israel, and took knowledge of them.

§ 27. MOSES' COMMISSION (Ex. iii. 1-10).—The Peninsula of Sinai is a tangled mass of jagged dolomite and granite peaks and ridges, divided by narrow valleys or narrower gorges. Among these valleys, some of which provide sweet pasturage, Moses led the flocks of Jethro. And there, beside Mount Horeb, "The Mount of God," God met him, and gave him his summons and commission to deliver Israel. His attention was caught by a wonderful spectacle. One of the bushy trees among the rocks was all aglow as if with flame, and yet was not being destroyed. Turning aside to examine this strange thing, he heard a warning to put off his sandals from his feet, for he stood on holy ground. Then, as Moses trembled at the greatness of that which happened to him, the silence of four centuries was broken, and God spoke directly to the heart of a man. Moses heard how that God had hearkened to the cry of His people, and purposed now to fulfil His promise, to deliver them from the hand of Pharaoh, and to bring them up out of the land of Egypt to take possession of Canaan. This much Moses could only learn with joy, but he was startled and alarmed to find himself summoned to be God's champion in the coming struggle, to face and challenge Pharaoh, and to deliver Israel from his grasp.

§ 28. DIFFICULTIES AND THEIR REMOVAL (Ex. iii. 11 ; iv. 17).—Moses staggered at the prospect that thus opened before him. One difficulty and objection after another presented itself, and one after another was removed by God. His sense of helplessness and insufficiency for the task was met by the promise, “Certainly I will be with thee”; his plea that he knew not in what name to claim authority over the children of Israel was set aside by the revelation of a new name of God: “I am that I am”—the Eternal, Self-Existing Jehovah. Thereafter God gave Moses a further explanation of His purpose in the form of two messages, one to the chief men of Israel, the other to Pharaoh himself. Moses and the elders of the people were to demand, in the first place, permission to go three days’ journey into the wilderness to offer sacrifices to their God. This request would be refused. Only after terrible chastisements by the hand of God would Pharaoh let the people go. But then they should depart, not as fugitives, but as a triumphant host, carrying their spoils with them.

Moses’ difficulties were not at an end. He foresaw the unbelief of the people, their refusal to accept him as the leader sent by God. But God gave him three signs to prove to himself and to the people the presence within him of divine power to create and to destroy, to blast and to restore.

Yet once more Moses objected that he was not a ready speaker, still less gifted with the eloquence required to plead effectively before Pharaoh. To this the reply was that God would be “his mouth,” and teach him what to speak.

Moses' objections were exhausted, but still he shrank from the task and responsibility to which God called him. Finally, he made an appeal to God to relieve him of the commission, and to send anyone else whom He might choose. "And the anger of the Lord was kindled against Moses." The slighted gift of God's own eloquence was withdrawn, and there was substituted in its place a human spokesman: Aaron, his brother, who could "speak well," was to stand at Moses' side. But Aaron was a gift of God's anger. He proved a helper to Moses, but also a great hindrance—a broken reed that pierced his hand when he leaned on it.

Moses could say no more. He silently accepted the commission, and returned to his father-in-law's dwelling-place, to set about its fulfilment. Before he left Horeb, however, he was met by Aaron, to whom he told "all the words of the Lord." And Aaron joined himself to Moses for the carrying out of God's will.

§ 29. MOSES RETURNS TO EGYPT (Ex. iv. 18-31).—Moses announced to Jethro his intention of returning to Egypt. It does not appear that any explanation of his decision was either asked or given. They parted on friendly terms. Moses left Midian no richer than he entered it. He put his wife and his two sons upon an ass, and set out on his journey. It was a strange guise in which to open so bold an undertaking, to challenge one of the chief kingdoms of the world. But Moses had learned no longer to trust the arm of flesh, or to despair because of its weakness; he had learned to depend only upon God.

He started comforted by the assurance that all those who had sought to slay him had passed away. But in the course of his journey he learned that even his high commission did not exempt him from his religious duties, or from the wrath of God when they were neglected. A mysterious shock of illness befell him, which he interpreted as due to God's anger that his second son was still uncircumcised. The rite of circumcision was performed by Zipporah who, when the act was done, spoke of Moses as thus made "a bridegroom of blood" (R.V.) to her. By that she meant, perhaps, as not a few suppose, that Moses was now bound to her by a second bond, blood being the seal of a bond or covenant. When Moses recovered, he proceeded on his journey alone, while Zipporah and her children probably returned to Midian, where they joined Moses at a later period.

Arrived in Egypt, Moses and Aaron visited the children of Israel in Goshen, and gathered together all the chief men. Aaron, taking the position of spokesman, delivered to them the message of the Lord, and displayed as their credentials the miraculous powers with which they had been entrusted. The people believed their report, and accepted them as messengers from God. The glad conviction dawned upon them that the Lord had mercifully looked upon their affliction, and they bowed their heads and worshipped.

§ 30. MOSES' FIRST INTERVIEW WITH PHARAOH : ITS RESULT (Ex. v. ; vii. 1-7).—It has always been a characteristic of government in the East that the king or governor holds an open

court, at which any person may present himself and make a personal appeal to the highest authority. Moses and Aaron availed themselves of this custom to lay before Pharaoh the message of the Lord. In the name of "the God of the Hebrews" they asked that "His people" might go three days' journey into the desert to offer sacrifice unto the Lord. Pharaoh's proud refusal to recognize the Authority in whose Name the request was made, was met by a solemn warning of the chastisement that would follow. But the king was only moved to anger at this persistence; he accused the brothers of hindering the children of Israel at their work. The only result of this first appeal was the laying of heavier burdens on Israel. At the command of the king, the taskmasters ceased to provide them with the straw which they required to mix with clay in brick-making; the people were henceforth compelled to gather it for themselves. At the same time, the daily quantity of bricks demanded of them remained unaltered. The suffering people found all their appeals for mercy met by the reply that they had been idle before; they turned in furious indignation on Moses as the true cause of the increase in their burden. It must have been a cruel trial to Moses' faith to find the only result of his interference in an increase of their misery, and himself loaded with the curses of the people whom he came to save. He turned from the people to God; he laid his case before Him, and in pitiful perplexity inquired, Why is it that Thou hast sent me?

§ 31. THE PROMISE AND COMMISSION CONFIRMED (Ex. vi. 1, 13; vii. 8-18). God's reply to

Moses' complaint took the form of a renewal of the promise, and a clearer revelation of the relation between God and Israel. He who had been known to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob by the name of El Shaddai, announced Himself as Jehovah, or Jahveh.* The new name was the symbol of a new relation, a covenant between God and a whole people. "I will take you to Me for a people, and I will be to you a God." Israel had come into existence as a people by the Will of God. It was henceforth exalted into a peculiar relation to Him, "Mine elect whom I have chosen" (*cf.* Deut. iv. 37; x. 15). God put His name upon them, and while He claimed them for His servants, "He was not ashamed to be called their God." He again pledged Himself to give them the land of Canaan, having redeemed them from Egypt "with a stretched-out arm and with great judgments."

Once more Moses returned to his people with the word of the Lord; but their disappointment and increased suffering made them deaf to his renewed assurances. They hearkened not unto Moses. It was only natural that when God commanded Moses again to appear before Pharaoh, he should point to this refusal of his countrymen. If they would not hearken, what hope was there of persuading Pharaoh? God authorized him; if required, to

* This sacred name is represented in the Hebrew Bible by the four consonants JHVH—the "Tetragrammaton." The later Jews held that this name was too sacred for human lips to pronounce; in *reading* the Bible, therefore, they always substituted the word which is translated "The Lord." In the course of time the true pronunciation of the Name was lost; in Jahveh or Jehovah the vowels are supplied only by conjecture.

display before the king the miraculous powers he had received, and to repeat his demands. The second appeal was as fruitless as the first. The signs which Moses and Aaron displayed in token of their commission were successfully imitated by the magicians of Egypt. The momentary impression made upon Pharaoh was effaced. Again he refused to let the people go.

§ 32. THE HARDENING OF PHARAOH'S HEART (Ex. vii. 3; Rom. i. 18-25; Rom. ix. 14-23). Throughout the narrative of the struggle between Pharaoh and Jehovah, the statement frequently recurs that Pharaoh's heart was hardened. In some passages the hardening is ascribed to Pharaoh himself, in others to God.* The difficulty in the suggestion that God Himself hardened Pharaoh's heart is not really a serious one, and is due mainly to a mental habit which may be traced in all the writers of the Old Testament, but it is not common with us. It was their habit of thought, and in a sense their philosophy, which led them to refer everything back to its ultimate cause in God. What God permits, God does. It is true; but the Hebrew brings constantly to the front the truth which we as habitually keep in the background. Where we should be content to say that Pharaoh hardened his heart, or that his heart was hardened, the Hebrew emphasizes the fact that behind the will of Pharaoh, behind any intermediate

* The same word "harden" is used to translate three different Hebrew words, which signify—1. Make hard; 2. Make strong, or bold (Ex. vii. 13; ix. 12); 3. Make heavy (Ex. vii. 14, R.V. "stubborn.").

causes, lies the will of God, who permits the hardening.

God cannot be less just than His creatures ; and our sense of His justice forbids us to believe that at any stage He prevented Pharaoh from repenting and changing his policy. Pharaoh's decision at each stage of the conflict was the free choice of his will, though of a will which was conditioned by his disposition and character acquired in the past. Some of the very things which made him mighty in the eyes of men, involved him in his rebellion against God. The pride and arrogance and the haughty contempt of others' lives, which marked an Egyptian monarch, the cruelty and indifference to human suffering which peculiarly distinguished this one, led now to his fall (*cf.* Prov. xxix. 1). These were the forces which decided Pharaoh's conduct. To God, who reads the heart, and knows the precise direction and weight of every motive, the issue is clear from the beginning. We cannot distinguish between God's foreknowledge and God's fore-ordaining the life of man.

If it be still a difficulty that God permitted Pharaoh so to exercise his choice as to rush upon destruction, it is only part of the original difficulty of sin. Goodness cannot be mechanically or magically secured. Choice is of the very essence of morality. The necessity of man's being good by choosing good involves at every stage the possibility of his freely choosing evil. The tragic thing in the story is that at every stage Pharaoh made his choice, and became the actual author of his doom.

§ 33. THE PLAGUES: THEIR PURPOSE (Ex. vii. 3-13; viii. 22; Num. xxxiii. 4).—The miraculous powers conferred on Moses had a double purpose: to authenticate his mission (*cf.* Ex. iv. 30), and to discredit the divinities of Egypt, in whom Pharaoh trusted. These powers were exercised at first in harmless exhibition of the authority with which Moses was armed. But when Pharaoh stubbornly refused to acknowledge the authority of Jehovah, the same power was exercised in a succession of terrible judgments upon the king and his people.

The great obstacle to Pharaoh's submission was his refusal to recognise the supremacy of Jehovah, the one living and true God. "Who is the Lord?" he asked, mockingly; "I know not the Lord, neither will I let Israel go." He insisted on regarding the God of Moses simply as a previously unheard-of rival to the gods of Egypt. The first purpose of the plagues was to convince him and his people of the reality and supremacy of Jehovah. "The Egyptians shall know that I am the Lord."

They were also intended to destroy the confidence of the Egyptians in the power and protection of their own gods, in the efficacy of the worship which they practised. It is important to notice that several of the plagues directly affected the faith of the people in one or other of their favourite deities, discrediting the power which was claimed for them; "upon their gods also the Lord executed judgments."

§ 34. THE PLAGUES: THEIR CHARACTER (Ex. vii. 14; x. 23; Ps. cv. 26-36).—The word translated "plague" means, literally, a blow or a stroke. Each one of the plagues was a stroke from

God's hand upon Egypt and its inhabitants. It is probable that none of the visitations was of a character absolutely unknown to the people. They all represented experiences which were natural but rare, or commonly insignificant. What turned them into plagues was their unexampled severity and their universality. There is also an ascending scale to be observed in their character. The first four proceeded from causes which commonly produced only annoyance or disgust ; they were raised, however, to actual torments by their severity and their universal prevalence. To these followed those which caused actual injury to crops, cattle, and men. Last of all came death, sudden and simultaneous, widespread, but selecting everywhere the choicest of the family. The plagues were more than punishments ; they were signs, evidences of the presence and purpose of God. What transformed them into a means of discipline, into experiences from which, though bitter, men might learn to know God, was their dependence upon the action and prediction of Moses, their connection with a specific demand by God, and a specific refusal by man.

§ 35. POLLUTION OF THE NILE (Ex. vii. 14-25).—The first two plagues were calculated to shake the confidence of the Egyptians in that great river which they worshipped as the Father of their country, and to turn their worship into disgust. In the very sight and presence of Pharaoh Moses smote the waters of the Nile, and they turned to blood. The stately river which was the source of life and prosperity to the people, and all the waters of the land, were changed into defilement and abomina-

tion. For seven days the plague continued. The Egyptians could get no pure water to drink except by digging. Their god was defiled before their eyes. But the magicians succeeded in imitating the miracle, and Pharaoh remained obstinate.

§ 36. **FROGS** (Ex. viii. 1-15).—Another summons, with a warning of the plague which would follow, proved vain. Aaron stretched out his rod, and the same sacred river was changed from a blessing into a torment to the people. It produced myriads of frogs, which “came up and covered the land of Egypt.” Again the magicians did likewise with their enchantments, but Pharaoh acknowledged for the first time the Power which smote him. He besought Moses to “entreat the Lord” for him. The intercession prevailed; the frogs ceased; but “when Pharaoh saw that there was respite, he hardened his heart.”

§ 37. **LICE** (Ex. viii. 16-19).—The next three plagues manifested the power of Jehovah over animal life, and the helplessness of the Egyptian gods, who claimed authority over its various forms. Aaron smote the dust of the land and it became lice or “sand-flies” “in man and in beast.” These vermin were a cause of peculiar horror to the Egyptians, who were scrupulously cleanly as a people, and also of ceremonial uncleanness, rendering the worship of their temples almost impossible. At this point the magicians gave up the attempt to reproduce the miracles of Moses. They admitted that they had now to deal with a real heavenly power. They said, “This is the finger of a god,” but still Pharaoh’s heart was stubborn.

§ 38. FLIES (Ex. viii. 20-32).—The fourth stroke was calculated to shake the faith of Egypt in the god who was supposed to protect the country from the scourge of flies. After warning given by Moses, a grievous swarm of “dog-flies” (or possibly “beetles”) came into the house of Pharaoh and into his servants’ houses, and into all the land of Egypt. For the first occasion the plague was such as to make a distinction possible between the Egyptians and the people of God. Jehovah put a “division” between them ;* while the rest of Egypt suffered the land of Goshen escaped the visitation. It was clearly manifested that Jehovah could not only overthrow the gods of Egypt, and destroy their land ; He could also protect the people of His choice.

This last infliction so far opened the eyes of Pharaoh that he entered into negotiations with Moses. He offered to allow the children of Israel to sacrifice to their god in Egypt. This Moses refused to accept. The offering of their sacrifices would be such a scandal in the eyes of the Egyptians, that a riot would probably ensue, and Israel would suffer. Moses insisted on his own terms, and Pharaoh yielded on condition that the people did not go far from the frontier ; but when the plague was stayed on the intercession of Moses, Pharaoh hardened his heart, and revoked his permission.

§ 39. MURRAIN (Ex. ix. 1-7).—Again Moses summoned Pharaoh, and threatened him with the consequences of refusal. His stubbornness was punished by the fifth plague, a fatal disease which attacked

* Cf. R.V., margin, “I will put redemption between My people and thy people.”

all the cattle of Egypt. Among these would be many which the Egyptians regarded as sacred, the representatives of some of their most famous gods. Once more a distinction was drawn between the Egyptians and the Israelites. The Israelite cattle escaped the visitation. But Pharaoh's pride would not allow him to draw the natural conclusion, and he refused to let the people go.

§ 40. **EPIDEMIC OF ULCERS** (Ex. ix. 8-12).—The sixth plague advanced from the land and property of the Egyptians, to attack their persons. An epidemic of painful boils or ulcers, breaking out on their bodies, spread throughout the land. The magicians being themselves infected, acknowledged their defeat by fleeing from the court. Nevertheless Pharaoh still refused to hearken.

§ 41. **HAIL** (Ex. ix. 13-35 ; Ps. lxviii. 47, 48 ; cv. 32).—The seventh plague was of so terrible a nature that Moses was commanded to give Pharaoh a special warning and description of its character. Even if he did not by submission altogether avert the impending calamity, he might save some of his people by warning them to quit the open country on which it was to fall. But neither compunction nor fear availed to overcome the pride of the king. Moses summoned the plague. Upon the land where even rain is hardly known, there burst an awful storm of thunder and lightning, "fire that ran along upon the ground," and, mingled with the lightning, came hail so thick and large that it smote the crops and the trees, the cattle and the men who were in the open field, and destroyed them. "He gave them hail for rain and flaming

fire in their land." It was a storm so appalling that there had been none like it "in all the land of Egypt since it became a nation." Only "in the land of Goshen there was no hail."

Pharaoh was now for the moment humbled. He sent for Moses and said, "I have sinned this time : the Lord is righteous, and my people are wicked." Would Moses again entreat the Lord for him? He would give the people unconditional permission to depart. But, once more, the plague had no sooner ceased at the prayer of Moses, than Pharaoh's heart was hardened, and he refused to let them go.

§ 42. LOCUSTS (Ex. x. 1-20). — Before the eighth plague also, a solemn warning was given and a detailed description of the calamity which was threatened. Pharaoh's counsellors summoned courage to remonstrate with him—"Knowest thou not yet that Egypt is destroyed?" They urged him to give way before the imperious and awful Power which Moses represented. The king showed himself not unwilling, but he insisted on a compromise. The men of Israel should go their three days' journey to sacrifice, but they must leave behind them their women and children as hostages for their return. But Moses refused all compromise. "We will go with our sons and with our daughters, with our flocks and with our herds will we go." Pharaoh dismissed the brothers angrily from his presence ; they went forth to summon the locusts. In countless myriads they came. They darkened the air. They covered the ground. They devoured every green thing. Whatever had escaped the hail

was destroyed by the locusts.* In haste, Pharaoh summoned Moses and Aaron again to confess his wickedness, and entreat the removal of the plague. But again, when the locusts had disappeared, his heart became as stubborn as ever.

§ 43. DARKNESS (Ex. x. 21-29).—The ninth plague, like the seventh, manifested the authority of Jehovah over the heavens, the impotence of the Egyptian deities of the sky. A darkness “that might be felt” covered the whole land of Egypt. For three days men saw not one another, neither did they stir from their abodes. It was as if the greatest of their gods, Ra himself, the Sun, had been dethroned and destroyed. Abject terror filled the hearts of all the people, “but all the children of Israel had light in their dwellings.”

This appalling visitation induced Pharaoh to offer to let the women and children accompany the men of Israel ; only they must leave their flocks and their cattle. But Moses would not bate a jot of his demands : “our cattle also shall go with us ; there shall not an hoof be left behind.” Pharaoh, furious at this pertinacity, bade him depart, threatening him with death should he again appear in his presence. So Moses left Pharaoh for the last time with the ironical farewell, “Thou hast said well ; I will see thy face again no more.”

Yet before he left the presence of the king, Moses announced to him the last and greatest of the strokes of God. It was one that would smite every family in the land, and cause a lamentation among all the

* For a poetical description of the appearance and ravages of locusts, see Joel i. 6—ii. 10.

people, "such as there was none like it nor shall be like it any more." Only the homes of Israel should be spared. They would depart not with the bare permission of Pharaoh, but at the request and urgent entreaty of himself and his people.

§ 44. RESULTS OF THE STRUGGLE (Ex. xi. 3 ; xii. 36).—This awful conflict between the will of a man and the will of God must have lasted for several months, possibly for the greater part of a year. It had its effects, not only on the king and people of Egypt, but also on Moses and Israel. Moses, who at the beginning of the struggle had been timid, self-distrustful, and easily shaken in his faith, had in the course of it become bold, confident, and courageous in his God. By absolute obedience to God, he had been exalted in the eyes of the Egyptians and also in the sight of his own people. He had established his right to be their leader, and he had acquired the power to lead.

Nor was the struggle without its effects on Israel. They had been its deeply interested spectators throughout. They had seen the God who claimed them for His people openly interfering on their behalf, their enemies afflicted and punished. From the exemption of Goshen in the later plagues they had learned that the same power which brought judgment on Egypt was working salvation for them. While the struggle swayed from side to side, and the event seemed doubtful, they were led to cling in alternate hope and despair to God their deliverer. When, finally, Pharaoh and the Egyptians were abashed, Israel had received the indelible conviction

that Jehovah who had appeared to Moses at Sinai was their Saviour and their God.

§ 45. PREPARATIONS FOR DEPARTURE (Ex. xi. 1-3; xii. 1-28).—The change which had come over the children of Israel was clearly shown in the readiness with which they accepted Moses' prediction of immediate release, and the fidelity with which they carried out the instructions he gave. The people of Egypt had learned to regard with respect and fear the people who had such a God for their Champion. They earnestly desired to see them depart. When the Israelites asked for gifts in view of their departure, their Egyptian neighbours loaded them with valuable presents. The chiefs of the people had got their instructions from Moses. They were instructions for the celebration of a feast, but of a feast fixed for such a time and celebrated in such a way that at the end of it every true household of Israel would be ready for the march.

On the fourteenth day of Abib, or Nisan, the month corresponding to parts of March and April, every family was to be gathered under its own roof. A lamb previously provided was to be killed, roasted and eaten as part of a common meal, with bitter herbs, and unleavened bread. But the family was to partake of it prepared as if for a journey, in haste, with their loins girt, their shoes on their feet, and every man with his staff in his hand. And before the meal commenced, care was to be taken to smear the posts and lintels of the house door with blood from the lamb. After that no one was to quit the house until the morning.

§ 46. THE LAST STROKE: RELEASE OF

ISRAEL (Ex. xii. 29-36).—These directions acted as a test to distinguish those Israelites who believed in the God of Moses from any who might still reject Him. When midnight came all true Israelites were gathered within their houses, their doors marked with the blood of the lamb. At midnight on that day the last and worst of God's judgments fell upon Egypt. The angel of death went through all the land and smote all the first-born of the people. Only where the blood-smeared lintel marked the home of devout and God-fearing Israelites the angel "passed over" that family. From all others in the land a great cry of lamentation arose, from the palace of Pharaoh to the house of his meanest subject, "There was not a house where there was not one dead." Overwhelmed by this appalling disaster, Pharaoh's pride at last gave way. He hastened to dismiss the people who had brought it upon him. He bade them begone, with their families, their flocks, and their herds.

The terror-stricken Egyptians added their entreaties to the command of the king. They did all that they could to hasten their departure; for they said "We be all dead men." So "Egypt was glad when they departed."* The Israelites were found ready and equipped for the journey. From all the villages of Goshen and other places where they had settled, they set forth. In gradually converging lines they marched eastwards to Succoth. The Exodus had begun.

§ 47. **THE EXODUS** (Ex. xii. 37-39).—The first stage of the journey was from the land or district of

* Ps. cv. 38.

Rameses (*cf.* Gen. xlvii. 11), in a direction due east, to Succoth. The departing people numbered six hundred thousand men, and with women and children cannot have fallen short of two millions,—so great and rapid had been the increase during Israel's sojourn in Egypt. Besides these there was also a "mixed multitude" of uncertain number and uncertain origin, slaves and outcasts, who threw in their lot with Israel. Their presence was afterwards a source of weakness and danger to the people of God.* Israel were accompanied also by their flocks and herds, "very much cattle," and burdened with all their goods and utensils. Neither did Moses forget the dying charge of Joseph. The coffin containing his bones was carried up by his descendants, returning to Canaan.

Under these conditions they could not travel far or fast, probably not more than fifteen miles in a day. The end of the first day's march found them in the district of Succoth, the Egyptian Thuku, not far beyond Pithom. Their route had been indicated to them by a mysterious guide, which took the form of a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. So the Lord went before His people, and was a light unto them in darkness.

§ 48. THE MARCH TO THE RED SEA. (Ex. xiv. 1-4 ; Num. xxxiii. 1-7).—The eastern boundary of Egypt was formed as to its southern part by the arm of the Red Sea, now called the Gulf of Suez. At the time of the Exodus this arm probably extended further to the north than it does now. From its northern end to the Mediterranean, at Pelusium,

* *Cf.* Num. xi. 4.

the Egyptians had constructed a chain of forts ("migdols") probably connected by a strong wall, in order to keep out the nomad tribes of the Arabian desert. On the inner side of the wall there was also a canal connecting the shallow lakes of the isthmus. This double barrier could only be passed at three points, where there were gateways, from which issued the three great routes to the East, one at each end and one in the middle of the boundary.* The shortest route to Canaan would have led the Israelites by "the way of the land of the Philistines," which passed the frontier barrier at its north end, and skirted the Mediterranean Sea; but that would have brought the unorganised and undisciplined people into almost immediate collision with the warlike Philistines. God therefore directed them by "the way of the wilderness of the Red Sea," the most southern route on leaving Egypt. From Succoth, accordingly, Moses advanced to Etham, "on the edge of the wilderness," an uninhabited district near the head of the Gulf of Suez, and round about the Bitter Lakes.

§ 49. PHARAOH'S PURSUIT (Ex. xiv. 5-10).—But it was by no gateway formed or opened by human hands that the people of God were to pass

* This wall of Egypt was probably known to the Hebrews by the name of the Shur, and the desert in front of it as the "wilderness of Shur" *cf.* Gen. xvi. 7; xxv. 18; 1 Sam. xv. 7; Ex. xv. 22). It is thought by some that the name Etham, or Khetam, was used by the Egyptians to describe the same barrier. It was carefully guarded at all times by troops stationed in the forts, and an accurate account kept and rendered to the governor of all who passed in and out. Such a record has been discovered, in which the military secretary at one of the migdols registered the various parties, their destination and their errand.

out of bondage into freedom. And the judgments of God upon Egypt, the manifestations of His chastising and His saving power, were not yet complete. Israel might have forced a passage for themselves; but when they were in sight of freedom, God bade the host swing round and march southward from Etham, so as to place the waters of the Red Sea between them and escape. He planted them in a position from which nothing but His own hand could deliver them. In the plain of Pi-Hahiroth (Pikerehet), with the Egyptian fortress of Migdol to the S.E., and the Red Sea in front, they were ordered to encamp. One result of this movement was that not only to themselves, but to the Egyptians, it seemed like courting disaster. Pharaoh, on hearing the news, concluded that they had been forsaken by their God: they were "entangled in the wilderness," without a door of escape. The king had recovered from the immediate shock of the last disaster. Already he longed to avenge himself on these his enemies and departing slaves. Now, he thought, he saw his opportunity. Swiftly collecting a body of troops, including especially horsemen and chariots, he set out in pursuit. One day's rapid marching would bring him in sight of the Israelite host, trapped, as he thought, between the desert and the sea.

§ 50. THE CROWNING DELIVERANCE (Ex. xiv. 10-31).—Terror fell upon Israel when they beheld the Egyptian army appearing behind them. They gave themselves up for lost. They turned angrily upon their leader to upbraid him for bringing them out of Egypt only to be slain in the

wilderness. But Moses, firm in faith, exhorted them only to wait, and they should see the salvation of the Lord. Then the word of the Lord came to him with encouragement, promise, and command. The cloudy pillar moved round from the front to the rear of the Israelite encampment. It stood between the two hosts, as a great bank of darkness before the Egyptians, but throwing a protecting light on the Israelites "so that the one came not near the other all the night."

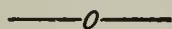
All that night there blew a strong east wind, and as Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, its shallow waters were driven back so as to expose its dry bed. The way of escape was open before the people of Israel. The word was given to advance, and the whole people passed safely across the barrier as on dry ground. When the day dawned the Egyptians beheld with surprise that their prey had escaped them. The storm was still raging, but they set out in pursuit. Horsemen and chariots in long lines flung themselves recklessly into the bed of the sea, but "the Lord looked upon them and troubled them." Horses stumbled and fell; the chariot-wheels were clogged, and the chariots sank in the sand. The Egyptians took fright, and began to cry to one another to turn and flee "for the Lord fighteth for Israel." But even as they turned, Moses, standing on the further brink, again stretched out his hand over the sea. The east wind that had held back the waters fell, the sea returned in its strength and overwhelmed the chariots and the horsemen, and all the host of Pharaoh. "There remained not so much as one of them."

§ 51. THE SONG OF MOSES (Ex. xv. 1, 21).—We are not left only to imagine the triumph of Israel. It was all the greater for its unexpectedness, its suddenness, and its completeness. The army of Egypt was not only defeated, it was destroyed. The oppressor was not only shaken off, he was humbled to the dust. And yet Israel itself had not lifted a hand. Other nations trace their victories and deliverances to their own exertions, endurance, or bravery, to the deeds of their heroes. Israel could trace theirs only to God. All that had been required of them was to stand still and see the salvation of God, and to believe in it sufficiently when the word was given, to advance. They had been mere spectators of the great work which the Lord did upon Israel, but they knew that it was done by their God, and for them. The impression produced at the moment was as deep as it was lasting. They believed Jehovah, they trusted in Him, and they hailed Him as their Saviour.

Their triumph expressed itself in the magnificent song of victory which is called the Song of Moses. It was chanted by the whole people, while Moses' sister, "Miriam the prophetess," and the women of Israel clashed their timbrels and filled up the pauses of the chant with the refrain, "Sing ye to the Lord, for He hath triumphed gloriously."

This crowning deliverance, the glorious climax of a long course of God's redemptive interference, marked the birthday of the People of God. It became the foundation of their consciousness as His chosen people, His purchased possession. "I gave Egypt

for thy ransom.”* Drawn by His hand out of the waters of death into a new life of freedom and fellowship with God, they were knit as by a sacrament of baptism to God, and to Moses, His representative.† The lapse of centuries was powerless to efface the memory of that great fact in which their history as a nation began. The Psalmists celebrated it.‡ Prophets appealed to it as the certain proof of God’s relation to His people, and of His saving power and purpose.§ Preachers reproached the people for seeming to forget it.|| At great crises in personal or national life, saintly men of God made it the ground of their appeal for renewed deliverance.¶ And when the purpose of redemption is finally accomplished, the triumph-song of heaven is to be the Song of Moses and the Lamb.**



CHAPTER IV.

THE EDUCATION OF GOD’S CHOSEN PEOPLE.

§ 52. THE SCHOOL OF THE WILDERNESS.
—Throughout the Bible a definite and peculiar significance is attached to certain countries, which become symbolical of certain eternal experiences of mankind. As Egypt is the Land of Bondage and Suffering, as Canaan is the goal of aspiration, the Land of Rest, so Arabia is the Land of Discipline

* Is. xliii. 3.

† 1 Cor. x. 2.

‡ Pss. lxvi., lxxiv., lxxviii., cvi.

§ Hos. xii. 9; Hag. ii. 5.

|| Is. lxiii. 11, 12.

¶ Nehemiah ix. 11.

** Rev. xv. 3.

and Preparation. The new-born people of God was not, and never is, ready at once to inherit the promises, or to enter into rest. Their knowledge of God was but a point : it required to be deepened and expanded. Their faith was weak and imperfect ; it required to be tested, purified, and weaned from trust in self and human power. Their character had to be shaped, moulded, and regulated to the Will of God. They required education. From another point of view, they were not yet organized into a nation. They were unfit to cope with the disciplined and warlike tribes of Canaan. They required discipline. The wilderness was, as it has often been, God's School, in which Israel advanced from childhood to man's estate. The wilderness pilgrimage of Israel answers to, and throws light upon, the Pilgrim's Progress of every soul that travels from the Land of Bondage to the Land of Rest in God.

§ 53. MARAH AND ELIM (Ex. xv. 23-27).—On the eastern side of the Red Sea, Israel found themselves in a waste and waterless country, where each day's journey would be measured by the distance to the nearest wells. The first halt would probably be made at the "Wells of Moses," at a short distance from Suez, where they would provide themselves with stores of water. Thence they travelled for two days in a south-easterly direction, having the Red Sea on their right, and the edge of the high tableland of Et-Tih on their left. On the third day they came to Marah, where, the whole district being saturated with salt, the longed-for water proved to be bitter. Already in this, their first difficulty, the

people broke out in murmurings against Moses. But in answer to his prayer, a shrub was indicated to him, which removed the bitterness of the water. The Israelites received their first lesson in God's power to provide for new needs ; but they had to be reminded of the conditions of His continued favour. God demanded of them obedience and righteousness. They had seen the fruits of disobedience and wickedness in Egypt. They were God's chosen people, but if they wished to escape like judgments, they must refrain from like conduct.

The next stage of their journey showed them that even the wilderness has its oases. At Elim they found twelve wells of water, sweet pastures, and the shady beauty of many palm trees. There they encamped and rested for several days.

§ 54. WILDERNESS OF SIN: MANNA (Num. xxxiii. 10-12 ; Ex. xvi. ; Ps. lxxviii. 19-27 ; John vi. 49, 50).—After leaving Elim and its plenty, the Israelites came to the shore of the Red Sea, to a barren district known as the Wilderness of Sin. Here the provisions with which they had set out the month before came to an end. They found themselves face to face with starvation. They had not yet learned the lesson of absolute trust in God's providence, and at once began to murmur. They lost both faith and courage. They would have willingly surrendered both their freedom and their future to be back beside the fleshpots of Egypt.

But Moses and Aaron, instructed by the Lord were able to comfort them with the promise of food. A miracle would be wrought, which would

not only provide for their need, but teach them throughout their journeying to depend absolutely upon God. The evening brought a great flight of quails, which "covered the camp"; and the morning displayed the God-given abundance of manna. When the dew had disappeared, the ground round about the camp was seen to be covered with small white particles like hoar-frost, or "coriander seed." The Israelites called it manna, either from the Egyptian name of a desert fruit, or from the words of wonder which its appearance called forth—"Ma-na," "what can it be?" The taste of it was like "wafers made with honey," and the Israelites found it both agreeable and nourishing. Day by day, throughout the wanderings of Israel in the desert, this mysterious food continued to be provided, but always under certain specific and instructive conditions. Each man was to gather each morning enough for the day's consumption. If either greed or hope of escaping the daily task, or fear lest the supply should fail, induced him to gather more than enough, and to hoard the surplus, it turned to rottenness in his keeping. Only on the day before the Sabbath each man was to gather a double supply, and on the Sabbath itself no fresh manna was found, neither did the old manna go bad. Thus were the people taught to look day by day to God for daily bread, and to sanctify the Sabbath, as God sanctified it Himself.

§ 55. REPHIDIM: WATER SUPPLIED (Ex. xvii. 1-7; Ps. lxxviii. 15, 16).—After two or three marches in the Wilderness of Sin, Israel was

directed to turn eastward, and so pass from the coast-plain into the mountainous district of Sinai. It was probably by the long and winding valley of Wady Feirân that they ascended into the heart of the mountains. To a people born and brought up in the alluvial plain of the Delta, the wilderness of frowning crags and precipices in which they now found themselves enclosed, would be a cause of ever-increasing wonder and awe. They moved slowly on toward the central mass, which culminates in Mount Sinai.

At Rephidim they again "tempted God in the desert," and learned a new lesson in God's long-suffering and care. There was no water. Their stores were exhausted. Without patience, and without faith, they began at once to murmur and to upbraid Moses, to ask openly, "Is the Lord with us, or not?" Moses appealed to God, was answered by the command to lead the elders of the people to a rock in advance of the host, and in their sight to strike the rock with his rod. From the rock thus smitten there gushed out a plentiful supply of sweet water. But Moses marked the character of the people's conduct by calling the spot Massah, "Temptation" (*cf.* Ps. xcv. 9), or Meribah, because of their faithless murmuring.

§ 56. REPHIDIM : DEFEAT OF AMALEKITES (Ex. xvii. 8-16).—At Rephidim also, the young nation was called on for the first time to put forth its own strength and courage in self-defence, yet not without Divine Assistance. They were attacked by the Amalekites, a powerful tribe, descended from Esau, who claimed possession of a great part of

the Negeb, or "South Country," and viewed with jealousy and alarm the approach of so large a body of strangers. Moses entrusted the command of Israel to Joshua, the son of Nun, who is mentioned here for the first time, and himself ascended the neighbouring hill, to pray for the success of God's people. So long as his hands were outstretched holding that Rod, which was the banner of Israel, the symbol of the presence of God, the children of Israel prevailed; and when he grew weary, Aaron, his brother, and Hur, his brother-in-law, or nephew, helped to hold up his hands, until Amalek was utterly discomfited. It was the first victory of God's chosen people, and served to confirm their courage and their faith in Jehovah. Against Amalek was pronounced a curse, which pledged Israel to perpetual hostility against them until they were finally destroyed by David (1 Sam. xxvii., xxx.).

§ 57. JETHRO: ORGANISED GOVERNMENT (Ex. xviii.).—Moses was now in the same district where he had shepherded the flocks of Jethro, his "father-in-law," and not far from the place in which Jethro dwelt. Either at this time, or, as some think, a little later, Jethro paid a visit to Moses, which had important consequences for Israel. He brought back to Moses his wife and two sons. By his coming he testified to the respect with which he regarded Moses, and by his words to the impression which was made on him by Jehovah's great works for Israel. Up to this time Moses had acted as sole judge in all cases of dispute among the people; but, at the suggestion of Jethro, he henceforth delegated his judicial functions to a

number of men chosen for their character and uprightness. The families of Israel were organised into groups of ten, fifty, and a hundred, with a headman, or judge, appointed over each, who had authority to settle cases of minor importance. Only the "hard cases," and those which involved a direct appeal to the Will of God, were still referred to Moses. Thus Moses was relieved of much of the burden of government; he was set free to represent the people before God, and to expound the Will of God to the people.

§ 58. SINAI (Ex. xix. 1-10).—In the third month after the Exodus the children of Israel arrived at the base of Mount Sinai, and "camped before the Mount." It is agreed by all who have examined the scene that no spot could be found more suitable to be the theatre of the great events which followed, or better adapted from its natural character to prepare the minds of the people for beholding them. In the long plain of Er-Rahah, enclosed on every side by frowning granite and limestone cliffs, there was room for the whole multitude to encamp in full view of the mountain. Straight in front of them rose from the plain the great mountain-block of Sinai, sheer and bare to its lowest peak of Ras-Sufsafeh: thence the eye travelled up and back to the higher and more distant peak of Jebel Musa, the summit of Sinai. Here, cut off from man, and shut in with God, with their eyes fixed on this awful and mysterious mountain-throne, Israel waited for the revelation of Jehovah.

It had been a strange, it may well have seemed an inexplicable, direction which was given to the

journey of the Israelites. Instead of advancing northwards towards Canaan by one of the longer desert routes, they had found themselves guided south and east to be entangled in these mazy defiles, and shut in by these mountain walls of Sinai. The meaning of this roundabout course was now to be made manifest. There, in the midst of surroundings which impressed them with awe and a sense of helplessness, where God was all, and man was naught, Israel was to be solemnly consecrated and set apart as the covenant people of God ; they were to be constituted as a nation differing from all other nations by the proclamation and acceptance of a divine constitution ; they were to receive from God Himself the charter of their national life. The Theocracy, the government of a nation by the will of God, was to be formally established. This, the Divine purpose of their coming to Sinai, was revealed to Moses, the representative of the people, when, soon after their arrival, he ascended the mountain alone to meet with God. The people were to be sealed unto God, as His "peculiar treasure," "a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation."

§ 59. PREPARATION FOR THE COVENANT (Ex. xix. 10-25 ; Deut. iv. 10-13 ; *cf.* Heb. xii. 18-21).—Every means was to be taken that the children of Israel might approach this supreme occasion in their history without rashness, haste, or presumption. Two days were set apart for preparation, during which the people sanctified themselves, putting away all uncleanness. The mountain itself, on which God talked with Moses, was fenced

round with guards, so that neither man nor beast might draw near to touch it, and it was ordered that any who presumed so much as to touch the rock should be put to death. At length, on the morning of the third day, there was heard the voice of a trumpet, exceeding loud, a thick cloud was seen resting upon the mountain, the thunder pealed, and lightning flashed. Moses brought all the people out of their tents "to meet with God," and they stood trembling at the base of the mountain. The mountain remained wreathed in clouds and smoke, "as the smoke of a furnace"; they saw it moved as by an earthquake. For the Lord descended upon Mount Sinai in fire, and while the people stood in terror and amazement, He summoned Moses to meet Him at the top of the mount; and "Moses drew near unto the thick darkness where God was."

§ 60. **COVENANT BETWEEN GOD AND ISRAEL** (Ex. xxiv. 3-8).—Under cover of the thick darkness that rested upon the mountain, Jehovah spoke with Moses as man with man. He proclaimed the Law of the Ten Words, or the Ten Commandments, as the moral basis of the relation between Himself and Israel. He communicated to him also the laws and promises contained in the "Book of the Covenant" (Ex. xx. 23—xxiii. 33). These included expansions of several of the Ten Commandments, the law of equivalent restitution for injuries, and regulations concerning usury, sacrifices, and the annual feasts to be observed by Israel. From this solemn interview Moses returned again to the people, and reported to them all these words and commandments; and

the people with one assenting voice signified their readiness to accept and obey the laws. On the following day, therefore, Moses celebrated a solemn service of dedication. He built an altar, offered sacrifices, and again rehearsed in the hearing of the people all those laws which he had written in the "Book of the Covenant." The people again, and yet more solemnly, pledged themselves to obedience. "All that the Lord hath said will we do." And Moses sealed the covenant by sprinkling them with the blood of the sacrifice. On the one side, Israel undertook to render absolute obedience to Jehovah; on the other side, Jehovah pledged Himself to be their God, and to send His Angel with them and before them, to open their way to Canaan.

§ 61. MOSES RETURNS TO THE MOUNT (Ex. xxiv. 8-18).—Once more Moses was summoned to ascend the Mount, taking with him this time Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy elders as representatives of the people. To them was granted a vision of the God of Israel, and a feast of communion in His Presence. "They saw God, and did eat and drink." But Moses was called to ascend yet higher, leaving the others behind. For six days the Glory of the Lord abode upon the mountain, a covering cloud, with a heart as of burning fire. And Moses went up alone into the cloud, and there remained for forty days, beyond sight and touch of man, in communion with God. During this time, Moses received directions for the erection and adornment of the Tabernacle, or Tent of Meeting, for the ordination of Aaron and his sons as hereditary

priests, for the discharge of their priestly duties, and for the sacrifices of atonement and consecration. The priesthood was to be the continual representative of the people before God, the Tabernacle the place where God condescended to meet His people through their representatives. "There will I meet with the children of Israel. And I will dwell among the children of Israel, and be their God." When at length this long period of communion and instruction was ended, God gave to Moses "two tables of testimony, tables of stone, written with the finger of God;" these tables contained "the words of the covenant, the ten commandments" (Ex. xxxiv. 28; Deut. iv. 13.)

§ 62. THE MOSAIC LEGISLATION.—By the Mosaic legislation we understand the whole body of laws, precepts, directions, and regulations which are contained in the books of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. A careful examination of this body of legislation shows that it may be naturally divided into a number of sections delivered at various times, and dealing with various subjects. These sections are distinguished from one another by the subject and character of their contents, and in some cases by verses which indicate the beginning or close of a section, or by the introduction of an historical narrative. Some parts of the legislation are also seen to be repeated, in some cases with modifications. It may be observed by a careful reader that many of the laws are such as could become operative only at a later period in Israel's history. They legislate for conditions which were not yet in existence when Israel was in the

desert. Some of them, for example, presuppose a settled rather than a nomad condition, agricultural rather than pastoral occupations—life in towns, not life in tents.* Other sections, again, appear to presuppose a state of religious life and thought which was only realised, as is shown by the books of Samuel and Chronicles, at a much later period.

For these and other reasons the question has often been asked—Was the whole of this legislation given during the desert wanderings, and was it all received and recorded by Moses himself? On the one hand it is replied that through Moses God legislated for the people both in their then condition and in the conditions which would prevail in later generations ; on the other hand, it is answered by many that while much of the law delivered by Moses was for all generations and all conditions, and while much also was applicable to Israel in the wilderness, there are considerable portions of the legislation which belong to a later period. In that case the sections which appear to be framed to meet later modes of life and thought must have been added, it is argued, at later dates to the Book of the Law. On this view the Jewish Torah or Code of Laws had its foundation in the laws given through Moses, but incorporated further revelations of God's will concerning conduct and worship from generation to generation.

§ 63. THE MORAL LAW : THE TEN COMMANDMENTS (Ex. xx. 1-17 ; Deut. v. 6-21).—The

* *E.g.*, Lev. xiv. 40-53, houses and a city ; Lev. xix., harvest, day-labourers, vineyards ; Num. xxxvi., land descending by inheritance ; Deut. xx. 5, 6, houses and vines.

foundation of the covenant-relation between God and Israel was the moral law, which "is summarily comprehended in the ten commandments." It lays down the principles which are to govern those relationships that are universal and perpetual—viz., those between man and God as his maker, and those between man and his neighbours. The laws of the First Table assert and defend the unity and spirituality of God, the sanctity of the Sabbath, and the duty of reverence towards all by which God expresses Himself. The laws of the Second Table defend life, property, marriage, and character against the attacks of hatred, greed, lust, and malice. It must not be supposed that the children of Israel had been in ignorance of these first principles of religious and social life up to the time of their proclamation from Sinai. "The moral law was first published, not when the tables of stone were graven at Sinai, but when the Holy Ghost wrote the law of God on the tables of Adam's heart."* Its contents were already recognised by man, attested by conscience, and to some extent observed in practice. What happened at Sinai was that these laws were solemnly republished, definitely expressed, and divinely ratified. From henceforth they form the acknowledged basis of Israel's relation to God, their observance, the condition of their continuing as His People, and of His self-manifestation as their God.

§ 64. OTHER LEGISLATION (*cf.* Gal. iii. 15 ; iv. 5).—Apart from the moral law, whose obligation is universal and perpetual, the Mosaic legislation may be divided into *ceremonial*, *civil*, and *agrarian*.

* Whyte. Shorter Catechism, p. 104.

In substance, as well as in form, these were neither universal nor perpetual. In part they referred to circumstances which sooner or later passed away, and in part they were "a shadow of good things to come." They pointed forward to "the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus," which was afterwards to be revealed and to take their place. But underneath the long series of minute regulations of life and worship which have been abrogated by changed conditions, or by the new revelation in Christ, there are principles of eternal worth. The ceremonial laws enforce the principles out of which they spring—viz., the separation between God, as holy, and man, as sinful; atonement and sacrifice as the necessary conditions of man's approach to God; and the duty of punctilious respect and reverent humility in all man's worship and service. The civil law continually enforces the principle of humanity, which it invokes to mitigate the necessary inequalities and hardships of human life, and to control the irresponsible authority of man over his fellow-man as well as over the dumb creation. And the agrarian laws embody principles which are calculated to protect society against the greed of individuals, to prevent the perpetuation of gross inequalities of wealth among the people of God. The application of all these laws was doubtless beneficial to the people who accepted them for their code. But yet more beneficial and important was the perpetual witness which they bore to the duties of reverence and humility, justice and mercy, purity and considerateness, their silent testimony against licentiousness, avarice, and tyranny.

§ 65. THE SIN OF THE GOLDEN CALF (Ex. xxxii.).—The prolonged absence of Moses upon the heights of Sinai led to uneasiness, murmuring, and finally rebellion in the camp of Israel. They “knew not what had become of him.” Fearing that they had been deserted by their leader, they were seized with panic, forgot the covenant into which they had so lately entered, and clamoured for gods whom they could see visibly in their midst. Even Aaron, whom Moses had left in charge, was carried away by the same panic, and became the minister of their sin. At his bidding the people brought to him all their golden earrings, out of which he proceeded to fashion for them a calf like unto the Apis-calf which they had seen worshipped as one of the gods of Egypt. It is not likely that either Israel or Aaron meant thereby to repudiate Jehovah as their God ; their object was rather to give Him a visible form. Their faith in a spiritual and invisible Presence had been unable to stand the strain of Moses’ absence. They set up the idol in the midst of the camp. Aaron proclaimed a festival for the following day. The people were intoxicated with excitement. They offered sacrifices before the new idol, and then abandoned themselves to such orgies and licentious dances as they had often witnessed in Egypt.

While this sad scene of apostasy was taking place in the camp, Moses, descending from the mount, accompanied by Joshua, came to the edge of the cliff which overlooked the plain. He had already been warned of God concerning the sin into which the people had fallen ; but the sight of the camp filled him with indignation. He flung out of his hands

the tables of stone which he was carrying, the testimony of the covenant already broken. They were dashed to pieces at the foot of the crag. Hurrying into the camp, Moses received the trembling and ineffective excuses of Aaron. He caused the calf-god to be utterly destroyed, and then called on all who were on the Lord's side to avenge Him upon the backsliders. The sons of Levi responded to the call, and, sword in hand, went through the camp, slaying all those who had been foremost in the licentious revelry. On that terrible day three thousand men were put to the sword.

§ 66. MOSES' INTERCESSION (Ex. xxxii. 7-14 ; xxxiii. 30-34).—The next day found the people cowed and penitent. Moses represented to them the greatness of their sin, and announced that he was about to return to the presence of God to intercede for their forgiveness. Already, on the previous day, God had threatened to put an end for ever to His covenant with Israel. He had offered to make Moses the head and founder of a new nation. But Moses loved his people better than himself; and pleading the honour of God, which was engaged in the sight of men to fulfil his promise to Abraham, had interceded mightily on their behalf. Now again he returns to the mount to renew his intercession. With matchless self-abnegation he offered himself as a propitiation for the sin of the people. He asked God rather to blot his own name out of the book of divine mercy,* and to spare Israel. His intercession prevailed. God announced that punishment would fall only on those who had sinned. He dis-

* Compare St Paul and his brethren, the Jews. Rom. ix. 3.

missed Moses with a command to lead the people forward towards Canaan, and a promise that the Angel of the Lord should go before them.

§ 67. **THE COVENANT RENEWED** (Ex. xxxiii. 12-23 : xxxiv.).—This earnest effort of faith and self-sacrifice over, reaction followed. The recent manifestation of the fickleness of the people, their evident readiness to fall back into idolatry and godlessness, caused Moses to receive with anxiety and trembling the command to advance. He craved to be assured that not only an angel, a messenger of the Lord would go before them, but that the very presence of God Himself would accompany them. He pleaded that it was this which distinguished Israel from all other nations of the earth, and proved that they enjoyed the favour of Jehovah. God granted the prayer of His servant, with the promise that His Presence should go with them, but Moses pled still for a further confirmation of his faith through a manifestation of the Divine Glory. God therefore invited him to ascend again into the mount of communion, and there Moses spent another space of forty days.

He carried up with him new tablets of stone, like unto the first, to have the ten words again inscribed on them. There, in the secret recesses of the mountain, God granted to Moses a special manifestation of His power and revelation of His character. "The Lord descended in the cloud, and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the Lord. And the Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed, "The Lord, The Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering and abundant in goodness

and truth." Thereafter God solemnly renewed the covenant with His people through Moses, enjoining absolute obedience to His laws, and promising to do marvellous things on behalf of Israel. At the end of forty days, Moses came down from the mount, bringing the two tables on which he had written "the words of the covenant, the ten commandments." There still clung to him some of the radiance of that Divine Presence in which he had been dwelling, but "he wist not that his face shone." Aaron and the people feared to approach him until Moses had covered his face with a veil ; and this he continued to wear whenever he came out from the Presence of God (*cf.* 2 Cor. iii. 13, 18).

§ 68. THE TABERNACLE (Ex. xxv.-xxvii. ; xxxv.-xl.).—The following months were spent in the gathering of materials for the Tabernacle, or Tent of Meeting. Moses had received minute directions concerning its construction and its furniture, and had been shown a pattern according to which it was to be made. The materials were provided out of the free-will offerings of the people, who brought gold, and silver, and bronze, linen, and goats'-hair, and skins, and that in such generous abundance that they had at last to be restrained from giving more. The two chief artificers were Bezaleel and Aholiab, cunning workmen to whom God had given skill "to devise curious works, to work in gold and in silver and in brass, in the cutting of stones, and the carving of wood." Under their instruction the people worked willingly, both men and women, at the preparation of pillars, and boards, all overlaid with gold, and curtains embroidered with

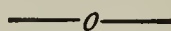
purple. At length, on the first day of the second year of the Exodus, the preparations were complete. Moses caused the Tabernacle to be erected. In the inmost tent, the Most Holy Place, he placed the ark of the covenant, containing the "testimony"; outside the veil or curtain in the outer tent he set the table of shewbread and the altar of incense; at the door of the Tabernacle he placed the altar of burnt-offering and the golden laver. Everything was provided and done according to the pattern and instructions.

When all was ready, Moses looked up to God for the token of His presence and favour, the fulfilment of the promise that the Tabernacle should be "a sanctuary, that God might dwell among them." And the expected sign was given. A cloud descended, covering the whole tent of the congregation, and filling the most Holy Place with glory. God thus condescended to manifest His presence. Henceforward the cloud upon the Tabernacle was the symbol that He dwelt among them—the indication of His will. It rested so long as they were to rest, it moved forward when they were to move (*cf.* Num. ix. 15-23).

§ 69. THE FIRST YEAR OF THE EXODUS.—

So closed the first year after the children of Israel departed out of Egypt, the first year of their existence as a people of God. They had learned much. To the primary experience of deliverance from Egypt had been added countless experiences of God's power and will to provide for every need, to guide their footsteps, and to deliver them in danger. The marvels of Sinai had impressed on them a new

sense of God's greatness, majesty, and holiness, of the intensity of His purpose concerning them. There also they had been directly instructed in the will of God. They had now a tradition, a code, and a destiny. And while their ignorance had been instructed, their foolishness had been corrected. They had shown the childishness, fickleness, and excitability of youth, the craven spirit of a nation which had been born in slavery. Their early murmurings had been met by long-suffering and gentleness, but their relapse into idolatry had been sharply chastised. They were slow to learn and quick to forget. Many a lesson and many a sharp discipline required still to be repeated again and again, and the first year sufficed to show how long would be the process of the formation of character, the annealing of faith and instruction in righteousness which God had undertaken. Nevertheless, these common experiences had knit them more closely together as a nation, taught them to depend more absolutely upon God, and to anticipate their great future with new hope.



CHAPTER V.

FORTY YEARS OF DISCIPLINE.

§ 70. DEPARTURE FROM SINAI (Num. i.-x.).
—The book of Numbers opens immediately after the erection and consecration of the Tabernacle, with the beginning of Israel's second year. The first

ten chapters are mainly occupied with a detailed description of the preparations for their departure from Sinai. There was first a numbering of the people, when it was found that of men above twenty years of age, fit for war, there were over six hundred thousand. At this time, also, the tribe of Levi was formally set apart for the special service of the Tabernacle. They were always to pitch their tents round about it, and on the march its various parts, its furniture and utensils, were assigned to their custody. Arrangements were also made assigning to each of the tribes its place both on the march and in the camp. Finally, on the anniversary of the flight from Egypt, the Israelites celebrated the Passover, the commemoration of their great deliverance from Egypt, and so prepared to cast themselves anew upon the guidance of God.

As soon as the Passover was completed, the signal for departure was given by the rising of the cloud which rested over the Tabernacle ; the camp was broken up, and Israel moved forward towards the wilderness of Mount Paran. By Paran we are probably to understand the whole plateau of Et-Tih, the "Desert of the Wanderings." It forms an elevated table-land of triangular shape, the point of which projects like a wedge into the Peninsula of Sinai, while the base runs across from the River of Egypt at El-Arish to the Arabah, a little south of the Dead Sea. It is separated on the north from Palestine proper by the Negeb, or "south country."

The immediate destination of the Israelites was Kadesh-Barnea, which is "eleven days' journey from Horeb, by the way of Mount Seir" (Deut.

i. 2), but, according to their way of travelling, many weeks were spent ere reaching it. On leaving Sinai they marched north and east, with the cliffs of the Tih plateau on their left, and the Akabah arm of the Red Sea on their right. Three days' march brought them to their first encampment at Kibroth-Hattaavah.

§ 71. KIBROTH - HATTA AVAH (Num. xi. ; Ps. lxxviii. 17-32).—Moses afterwards described this journey to Kadesh-Barnea as having been through a “great and terrible wilderness.” In the very first stages of it the endurance of the people gave way. They complained so bitterly that the anger of the Lord was kindled, and the swift judgment of fire or lightning fell upon them, which was only stayed on the intercession of Moses. At Kibroth-Hattaavah again the mixed multitude, the “riff-raff” of alien peoples who had come up with the Israelites out of Egypt, fell a-lusting for the flesh-pots of their old country, and stirred the rest of the people to discontent. “Nothing but manna to eat” was the burden of their complaint. The anxiety of governing this weak and murmuring multitude was too great for Moses to bear alone. He would fain have given up his post and responsibility, even life itself, rather than continue the sole object of their clamour. As he cried thus unto God, he was comforted with the assurance that henceforth the elders of the people should share both his responsibility and his power. Seventy of the elders were assembled before the Tabernacle, where the Lord bestowed on each of them a portion of that Spirit which he had given to Moses. They testified to the power which had come

upon them by prophesying, *i.e.*, probably breaking out into ecstatic proclamation of their faith and adherence to God. Even two who had been absent from the Tabernacle received the blessing, and began to prophesy. It was the beginning of the extension of religious enthusiasm and spiritual power beyond the narrowest circle of God's prophets. It was the heralding of that time which Moses longed for (Num. xi. 29), and Joel foretold, "I will pour out My Spirit upon all flesh."

God undertook also to satisfy the longing of the people for flesh-food, but it was a gift in anger ; its very abundance provoked disgust, and it was followed by a plague. Once more a great flight of quails came up over the camp. "He rained flesh upon them as dust." The people collected immense quantities ; but even as they fed, the wrath of God fell upon them, the men whose God was their belly. A very great plague broke out among them, and so many died that Moses called the name of the place Kibroth-Hattaavah, the Graves of Lust. A recent traveller who identified the site believed that, in the hearths, signs of the action of fire, and pieces of charcoal, he found actual traces of the visit of the Israelites ; while "just outside the camp were a number of stone heaps, which, from their shape and position, could be nothing but graves." *

§ 72. DISLOYALTY OF MIRIAM AND AARON (Num. xii.). — At Hazeroth, their next camping-place, Moses found his authority attacked by his own brother and sister. Their jealousy seems to have been aroused by an Ethiopian wife of Moses,

* Palmer, "Desert of the Exodus," pp. 258, 312.

whom he had married (it is supposed) after the death of Zipporah. They challenged the right of Moses to govern the people as the sole interpreter of the Divine Will ; they claimed to share both his privilege and his authority. Such a claim to equality on the part of unauthorised leaders might have led to disruption and disaster. The rebuke and punishment came not from Moses, but from God. Aaron and Miriam were summoned, together with Moses, to appear before God at the door of the Tabernacle. They were made to understand the distinction which exalted Moses to supreme authority over the people of God. To them and to others God might make His will known "in a dream" ; to Moses He spoke "mouth to mouth." The extension of the privilege of spiritual enlightenment must not encourage human ambition to claim authority which God had not given. In order to mark God's anger at their presumption, Miriam was struck with a leprosy. Aaron acknowledged the folly of which he and his sister had been guilty, and Moses entreated God to remove the punishment. But for seven days Miriam continued a leper, and was shut out from the camp.

§ 73. KADESH-BARNEA: MISSION OF THE SPIES (Num. xiii. ; xiv. 1-39 ; Deut. i. 19-40).—After passing a number of camping-places, concerning which only the names are recorded, Israel arrived at Kadesh-Barnea. Here they were in that part of Paran which was adjacent to the hill-country of the Amorites, and not far from the border of Canaan. Before them lay the Negeb, a district of rolling hills, probably more fertile and better culti-

yated than it is now. Beyond it rose the hills round about Hebron, the beginning of the hill-country of Judæa. Three or four days' marching would have brought them to Beersheba. Their goal was in sight, their journey appeared almost at an end. If only the faith of the people had been strong enough, their character equal to their opportunity, they might have advanced at once to take possession of their inheritance.

Moses exhorted them to advance, but their hearts failed them, and they asked that before that was done, spies might be sent to explore the land, and bring a report of its condition and the probabilities of success. God instructed Moses to yield to their request, and twelve men were despatched, one from every tribe. They went up through the Negeb, and explored the land of Canaan as far as the mountains of Lebanon; then, returning by Hebron, and the valley of Eshcol, they gathered grapes, pomegranates, and figs, to show what the country produced. After forty days they returned to Kadesh-Barnea. When they gave their report to Moses and the people they admitted that it was a land in every way to be desired, a land of plenty, "flowing with milk and honey." But they had been dismayed by the difficulties which an invading people would have to meet—the fortified cities, "walled up to heaven," and the great stature of the inhabitants, in whose sight they were "as grasshoppers." Alone of all the spies, Caleb and Joshua, reported as men of faith and courage, urging the people to trust in the Lord, to go up and possess the land—"for we are well able to overcome it."

But the people were of a spirit akin to the majority of the spies. They regarded the difficulties as insurmountable. They gave themselves up to discouragement and lamentation. They murmured loudly against Moses and Aaron, openly regretting that they had not remained in Egypt, or died in the wilderness. Finally, they proposed to choose a new leader, and invite him to take them back to Egypt. They would prefer a life of fettered ease to the strenuous exertion of conquest.

It was in vain that Moses and Aaron besought them to contain themselves, in vain that Joshua and Caleb repeated their conviction that the land was as bread waiting for them to eat, reminded them of the presence and strength of Jehovah, which was theirs, and urged them to greatly dare in His Name. The people only sought to silence by stoning them. Then God Himself interposed. His anger was hot against Israel. Once more He threatened to disinherit and destroy them, and offered to make of Moses the founder of a yet greater nation. But Moses put aside the offer, and entreated God to pardon the people. He based his prayer on the pledge which God had openly taken to bring Israel into Canaan, the interest with which Egypt and the surrounding tribes were watching the advance of Israel, the scornful triumph of the unbelievers if God were now to abandon His people.

This prayer of Moses prevailed so far as to save the race and future of Israel. But against the present generation a terrible sentence went forth. They had seen God's glory and the miracles which He wrought for them in Egypt and the wilderness.

Nevertheless they had remained faithless and ungrateful. They had proved themselves unfit and unworthy to be the conquerors of Canaan. Their sin had checked the fulfilment of the promise and purpose of God. "Ye shall know the altering of My purpose." Of that stiff-necked generation, therefore, no one except Caleb and Joshua should live to see the Promised Land. From its very threshold where they stood they were to turn back, to become wanderers in the wilderness, until the whole generation had passed away of those who came up out of Egypt. The immediate death of the ten cowardly messengers, smitten by a plague "before the Lord," gave an appalling confirmation to the sentence thus pronounced.

§ 74. **DISASTROUS ATTEMPT TO ADVANCE** (Num. xiv. 40-45 ; Deut. i. 40-45.—The proclamation of this judgment upon the faithless generation caused a great revulsion of feeling among the people. They became now as eager to advance as previously they had been unwilling. In spite of the warning of Moses that they were acting without God, and only courting defeat, they determined to force a passage for themselves to Canaan. Without either Moses to guide, or the Ark of the Covenant to sanctify their march, they pushed forward from Kadesh-Barnea into the hill-country of the Negeb. The presumptuous attempt was doomed to failure. The way to Canaan was barred by the hand of God. They were immediately attacked by the Amalekites and the Amorites, who put them to utter rout, and pursued them "as bees," as far as Hormah, or Zephath, in the wilderness of Paran.

§ 75. THE PENAL WANDERINGS (Num. xxxiii. 1-49).—For eight - and - thirty years the children of Israel were excluded from their inheritance, and condemned to lead a nomad life, moving from place to place in the wilderness of Paran, and never finding a home. Their history during this period is all but a blank. We know little more than the names of their camping-places. For the old generation it was the slow working-out of judgment—a hopeless pilgrimage which could have no end but death. For the new generation of those who had been born in the wilderness, there was blessing in the discipline and hope in the future. Theirs was a hardier and sterner race, born in freedom, and nursed in the bracing atmosphere of struggle. They must have fought many battles in order to maintain their position among the neighbouring tribes. They must have undergone many privations and faced many dangers. They had before their eyes the judgment which was being fulfilled upon their fathers, the evidence of God's anger against faithlessness and cowardice. But they had also experience of His continued favour and providing care in the manna which was still given for their daily need. The Tabernacle also, with its sentinel-cloud, moving with them in all their wanderings, testified that they were not forsaken by Jehovah. The new generation grew up as the conscious heirs of an unfulfilled promise, warned by judgment, braced by discipline, and stimulated by a growing hope.

§ 76. CONSPIRACY OF KORAH AND DATHAN (Num. xvi.).—It is easy to understand how this

unexpected check, and the years of aimless pilgrimage which followed, exposed both the authority and the patience of Moses to a severe strain. We see indications of the strain being carried to breaking-point in the only two important events which are recorded during this period. The Israelites continued for a considerable time to make Kadesh the centre of their wanderings, and it was probably at Kadesh that the rebellion of Korah and Dathan broke out. Korah himself was a Levite. He and a number of his brethren were dissatisfied with their humble position as servants of the Tabernacle. They resented their inferiority to the priesthood, which was confined to the family of Aaron. They argued that "all the congregation was holy, every one of them," that Moses and Aaron, therefore, "took too much upon them" in claiming for their own family an exclusive right to draw near to God. They demanded that the priesthood should be thrown open to the other branches of the house of Levi also. They appear even to have presumed to act as priests, providing themselves with censers. Possibly they sought to erect a rival tabernacle.

Alongside of this attempt to wrest the priesthood from the family of Aaron, an attack was also made on the personal authority of Moses. It was headed by Dathan, Abiram, and On, of the tribe of Reuben, but they were supported by no fewer than two hundred and fifty other chiefs, "famous in the congregation, men of renown." They upbraided Moses with his failure to fulfil the promise in dependence on which they had set out. He had brought them not into, but only out of, a land flow-

ing with milk and honey. He had brought them into a wilderness to die. They accused him of personal ambition, and an intention of making himself "altogether a prince" over them. In this temper they returned a flat refusal to a summons which Moses sent to them. "They envied Moses in the camp, and Aaron the saint of the Lord."

The two parties appear to have conspired together, Korah encouraging the Reubenites to claim a share in the ecclesiastical, as well as political, privileges. Moses appealed to the Lord, and by His direction invited the rebels to put their claims to a test. They were to fill their censers with incense, and present themselves before the Tabernacle to offer it as though they were priests. Meanwhile, all who adhered to Moses as the authoritative revealer of God's Will were warned to remove from the neighbourhood of the "tabernacle of Korah." Then a double judgment fell on the rebels. When Moses had finished speaking, the earth opened under the feet of Korah and his party and "swallowed them up, and their houses, and all the men that appertained to Korah, and all their goods." At the same time "there came out a fire from the Lord," which smote the men who presumptuously offered incense before the Tabernacle, and destroyed them all. Their censers were collected and beaten out into plates for a covering of the altar, "to be a memorial to the children of Israel, that no stranger which is not of the seed of Aaron come near to offer incense before the Lord."

On the following day further confirmation was given to the Aaronic priesthood. The people were

indignant at the destruction of many of the noblest in Israel. They murmured that Moses had "killed the people of the Lord." The anger of the Lord was kindled against them, and a plague fell upon the camp. "He lifted up His hand against them to overthrow them in the wilderness." But at the bidding of Moses, Aaron took his censer, kindled with fire from off the altar, and passed through the camp, making atonement for the people, and the plague was stayed. The people owed their deliverance to the intercession of Aaron.

§ 77. MERIBAH: THE SIN OF MOSES (Num. xx. 1-13).—The second event reveals the severity of the strain upon the patience and character of Moses. Towards the end of the forty years the children of Israel found themselves again in Kadesh. There Miriam died and was buried. There also the ever-recurring drought produced the ever-recurring dissatisfaction and murmuring among the people. They attacked their leader more fiercely than before. They repeated their old complaints and charges with increased bitterness. God was still willing to be patient, and to provide for their wants as He had already so often done. He bade Moses take his rod in his hand, and having gathered the people together, "speak unto the rock in their presence," that it might give forth its water. Moses obeyed in part. But when the people were gathered before him, he turned fiercely upon them and said, "Hear now, ye rebels; must we fetch you water out of this rock?" Then, when he should have spoken to the rock, he struck it twice with his rod.

The waters gushed out, and the people quenched

their thirst ; but Moses was at once aware that he had erred grievously. How grievously he had offended God we may judge from the severity of his punishment. God pronounced this sentence, that neither Moses nor Aaron, who had shared with him in the fatal error, should enter the Promised Land. It would be Moses' task to bring the people to the border of Canaan, his doom to set no foot upon it. The hope was cut off to which he had consecrated a lifetime. By the blunder of a moment he forfeited all he had lived for, the only reward he sought for all those years of faithfulness, patience, and self-sacrifice.

Upon the surface this sentence seems to follow on the momentary lapse from absolute obedience, and it looks disproportioned to the sin. But God both reads and judges the secret thoughts of the heart. What he saw in Moses at that time was more than a single act of disobedience, more than ungoverned anger against the people. It was a collapse of character and faith. God saw probably nothing less than anger against Himself, a furious uprising of Moses' lower nature against the mercy and long-suffering with which God still treated the people. Moses could not forget that this was now the new generation, untainted by the effects of Egyptian slavery, born a people of God, before whose eyes both the judgments and the mercies of God had been manifest all their days. It was the generation to which Moses looked for the conquerors of Canaan. When they murmured like their fathers, when they showed no more faith in God, and respect for His servant than their prede-

cessors, Moses gave himself up to indignation and despair. Had God offered to destroy this faithless people, Moses would probably not have again interposed to save them. He thought God's further sparing them a mistake. He lifted his human judgment and will in opposition to the Divine ; he acted as if he knew better than God. God had not rebuked the people. Moses reprimanded them with the haughty insolence of a despot. "He spake unadvisedly with his lips." God had bidden him speak to the rock. Moses insisted in making *his* authority, *his* share in the miracle, more obvious to the people. By his assumption of the Divine Prerogative he diminished the honour of God. He failed through unbelief, "because ye believed Me not . . . therefore ye shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given them."

§ 78. ISRAEL SETS FORTH FOR CANAAN (Num. xx. 14-21 ; Deut. ii. 1-8). — At length the long period of waiting and wandering came to an end. The generation which had shewn itself wholly unworthy was extinct ; it had been succeeded by another, which, though not perfect, was better fitted to be an instrument of God's purpose. Moses still carried on the task which he knew he should not live to complete. The word was given to leave Kadesh and advance. But the advance was to be by a new route. To attack Canaan from the south would, even if the attack were successful, result in driving back an ever-increasing mass of enemies, who might ultimately return, and overwhelm Israel. They were led, therefore, by a circuitous route, so as to enter the Promised Land about the centre of its

eastern frontier, at a point from which they advanced like a wedge into the heart of the country, delivering crushing blows on the right hand and on the left. In taking this direction the shortest route would have led them to cross the Arabah, not far from the south end of the Dead Sea, and pass through the territory of Edom into the plains of Moab. But the King of Edom refused the permission which Moses sought for a passage through his country. It became necessary, therefore, to make a wide circle round the country of Edom. They moved from Kadesh south-eastward, crossed the depression of the Arabah at Ezion-Geber, close to the Gulf of Akabah, and so, having turned the flank of Edom, proceeded northwards along the back or east side of Mount Seir.

§ 79. DEATH OF AARON (Num. xx. 23-29).—In the course of this journey, the Israelites came to Mount Hor, “by the coast of the land of Edom,” probably Jebel Harun, “a fine jagged peak, which towers conspicuously above the neighbouring heights.” Here it was made known to Moses that Aaron’s time had come to die. They bowed to the Will of God. Together with Eliezer, Aaron’s eldest son, the two brothers ascended the mountain. Moses took off from Aaron the robes which marked his sacred office as high priest of Israel, and put them upon Eliezer, who was to be his successor. Then “Aaron died in the top of the mount.” Moses was left alone, the last as he was the greatest of his family.

§ 80. MURMURING AND PUNISHMENT : THE BRAZEN SERPENT (Num. xxi. 4-9 ; John iii. 14,

15).—In the same wilderness of Mount Seir the children of Israel again gave way to their old vice of cowardly murmuring. Their endurance was taxed by the hardships and privations of the march ; they “murmured against the Lord, and against Moses.” The Lord sent “fiery serpents” to chastise them, and many of the people died from their bites. When, however, they acknowledged their sin and faithlessness, Moses was told to take measures for their relief, which would test their repentance and their faith. He made the figure of a fiery serpent in bronze, and set it up upon a pole in the midst of the camp. Then he called on all the sufferers to look on this picture of their vanquished enemy. Those who did so, proved their changed mind, showed their obedience and their faith, and they were healed. He that “looked upon the serpent” lived.

The brazen serpent, thus lifted up for the healing of the people, was taken by our Lord as an illustration of His own lifting up upon the Cross, “that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish.” They who thus behold their sin vanquished, their enemy overcome by God, they who, by obeying the summons, “Behold the Lamb of God,” manifest a like faith and obedience, receive a like healing and deliverance from eternal death.

§ 81. VICTORIOUS ADVANCE (Num. xxi. 10-35 ; xxxii. ; Deut. ii. ; iii. 1-11).—The land into which the Israelites now advanced, bounded on the west by the Jordan and the Dead Sea and on the east by the desert, was at this time occupied by three different peoples. Two of these, Moab in the south and Ammon in the north, were of the same stock as

Israel, being descended from Lot. These, therefore, they were commanded not to vex or harass in any way (Deut. ii. 9, 19). The third people, the Amorites, were of Canaanitish stock, belonging to the peoples whom Israel was come to destroy. Moses, therefore, led the children of Israel along the eastern frontier of Moab. When they crossed the Arnon, however, they came into the territory of the Amorites. Moses sent messengers to Sihon, king of Heshbon, to ask for an unhindered passage ; but Sihon refused, and came out to meet them with his army. In the battle of Jahaz, which ensued, Israel was victorious. Sihon was slain, Heshbon, his capital, was taken and destroyed, and his cities, from the Arnon to the border of Gilead, one after another, fell into the hands of the Israelites. Pushing on still further to the north, they crossed the Jabbok, attacked Og, the king of Bashan, and defeated him in a pitched battle at Edrei. Their victorious advance did not stop till they had possessed themselves of the whole of Eastern Palestine, from the Arnon, which flows into the Dead Sea, to Gilead and Mount Hermon.

As this formed part of the inheritance promised to Israel, Moses proceeded at once to apportion it among the tribes. At their own request he divided it among the tribes of Reuben and Gad, and half the tribe of Manasseh, who were very rich in cattle, and saw in the vast plains of Gilead ample pasturage for their flocks and herds. Before allowing these tribes to settle in their inheritance, Moses exacted of them a solemn undertaking that they would send all their armed men to take their share

in conquering Canaan for the others. This undertaking they faithfully fulfilled, and only when the Lord "had given rest unto their brethren" did they return to their possessions on the east of Jordan (Josh. xxii. 1-10).

§ 82. ISRAEL AND MOAB (Num. xxii.-xxv.).—In spite of Moses' care to do no injury to Moab, the victorious march of Israel had been watched with jealousy by the Moabites and by Balak, their king. Balak determined, if possible, to crush them, and took two different means for the purpose. He entered into an alliance with the Midianites to attack Israel, and he sent messengers to bring from Mesopotamia Balaam, a famous soothsayer, to "curse Israel for him." Balak led Balaam from point to point along the hills that he might behold the alarming numbers of Israel; but at every place Balaam, unable to defy the conviction that Israel was blessed of God, refused to curse them, and "blessed them altogether." His prophecies only foretold with increasing fulness and clearness the continued success and prosperity of Israel, and the certain overthrow of their enemies.

Balak, however, came nearer to ruining Israel by false friendship than by open hostility. Enticed by women of Moab many of the Israelites fell away into wickedness and idolatry. "They joined themselves to Baal-Peor, and ate the sacrifices of the dead" (Ps. cvi. 28-30). The judgment of God fell upon them. A terrible plague had already destroyed many thousands of the people before the indignation of Phinehas, the grandson of Aaron, avenged the honour of Jehovah, and caused the

plague to cease. The last war in which Moses took command of Israel was a war of vengeance upon Midian for the part which they had taken in withstanding and tempting the people of God. The Midianites were utterly routed and destroyed.

§ 83. IN VIEW OF CANAAN (Deut. i. 1-5).—The children of Israel had now arrived at the borders of the Land of Promise. They were encamped at Shittim, “in the plain of Moab, by Jordan, near Jericho” (Num. xxxv. 1). Only the river separated them from their inheritance. Here a new census of the people was taken, when it was found that they still numbered about six hundred thousand, but “among them there was not a man whom Moses had numbered” in the wilderness of Sinai (Num. xxvi. 64).

In the same place, in the eleventh month of the fortieth year, Moses delivered to the children of Israel the solemn parting address which is preserved in the Book of Deuteronomy. “He rehearsed their history, and recapitulated those commandments and that covenant, by adhesion to which they were to become a people peculiar and heaven-protected. In these thirty chapters, we have the essence of Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers, only conveyed in a tone of patriarchal affection and personal tenderness. Deuteronomy is a speech rather than a book, full of that anxious fidelity and fatherly desirousness, which, knowing that it is a last opportunity, can hardly leave off.”* Looking forward to the future, Moses summoned Israel to take heed to themselves, to cleave to the

* Hamilton, “Moses, the man of God,” p. 365.

God who had loved and chosen their fathers, remembering "all the way by which, the Lord thy God led thee these forty years." The laws which Moses had written down, and which he had hitherto kept himself, he now handed over to the priests and the elders of Israel, to be kept in the Ark of the Covenant. He commanded that every seven years, in the "year of release," these laws should be read before all Israel in their hearing.

The book concludes with another "Song of Moses," and a Blessing, "wherewith Moses, the man of God, blessed the children of Israel before he died." The Song strikes the notes of praise and gratitude to God, but more loudly still the notes of warning against infidelity, and of defiance against the false gods. The Blessing corresponds in structure with the parting blessings of Jacob; it anticipates the future destinies of the tribes, and concludes with a magnificent outburst, "The Eternal God is thy Refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms. Happy art thou, O Israel : who is like unto thee, O ye people, saved by the Lord ?"

§ 84. JOSHUA APPOINTED MOSES' SUCCESSOR (Num. xxvii. 12-53 ; Deut. xxxi. 7, 14, 23).—Only one thing remained to be done before Moses laid down his task and submitted to the will of God that he should die without entering Canaan. When God signified to him that the time was come, he prayed "the God of the spirits of all flesh" to set a man over the congregation, that they might not be as sheep without a shepherd. The man whom God selected to carry on the work of Moses was Joshua, the son of Nun. He had been for

many years Moses' minister or servant, had commanded Israel in the battle with Amalek, and had distinguished himself as one of the two spies who urged the people to go forward with faith and courage. He was "a man in whom was the Spirit," well qualified by experience, military skill, character, and faith. By the command of the Lord, Moses took Joshua, and setting him before Eliezer, the high priest, in the sight of all the people, laid his hands upon him, and ordained him as his successor. He spent his last days in instructing and encouraging Joshua, bidding him be strong and of good courage, that he might bring the people into the possession of their inheritance.

§ 85. DEATH OF MOSES: HIS CHARACTER (Deut. iii. 23-29; xxxii. 48-52; xxxiv. 1-8).—In Moses' parting address to Israel, there is a touching reference to an appeal which he had made to God on his own behalf. Many a time he had interceded for Israel, and his prayer had been granted. Once only he pleaded for himself, that the Lord God, "Who had begun to show him His greatness," would spare him yet to "go over and see the good land that is beyond Jordan." There seemed no necessity in nature for his death. Though he had reached the age of a hundred and twenty years, "his eye was not dim, nor his natural strength abated." Nevertheless, this prayer met with a stern refusal: * "Let it suffice thee; speak to Me no more on this matter." One thing, however, was granted to Moses, to see with his eyes the goodly land of promise. When his preparations were com-

* Cf. 2 Cor. xii. 7-9.

plete, and Joshua was installed as his successor, he obeyed the voice of the Lord, which summoned him to ascend one of the neighbouring mountains of Nebo,* or Pisgah, over against Jericho. He quitted for the last time the camp, and went up from the plains of Moab. We are not told that he was accompanied by any one, though tradition asserts that Joshua and Eliezer went with him. From the top of Pisgah the Lord shewed him all the land of Canaan, Gilead on the East of Jordan, Galilee, Samaria and Judea, Jericho, and the valley of the Jordan. He looked down on the hosts of Israel below, and he knew that, if not by his hand, by that of Joshua, they would be led up to possess all that goodly land.

Then Moses gave himself into the hands of God. He died there in the mountain of Moab. No man carried him to his tomb, for God "buried him in a valley over against Beth-Peor," so that no man knoweth his grave until this day.

In the character of Moses we find one of the greatest heroes of the world's history. His achievement was great, but he himself was greater than his achievement. To the sagacity of a great statesman, and the military genius of a great commander, he added the higher qualities of self-sacrifice, courage, patience, and meekness. Each quality in this rare combination was raised to its highest power, and all were controlled in due balance and proportion by a wisdom which was from above, a constant dependence on the guidance of God. Moses threw away ambition to cast in his lot with an obscure and

* Called also Abarim (Num. xxi. 11 ; xxxiii. 44, 47)

despised nation. When it appeared that this sacrifice had been in vain, he underwent, without murmuring, the forty years' exile and discipline of the desert. Emerging from that obscurity, armed with the authority of Jehovah, he showed a courage that was not daunted by the power or menace of Pharaoh, a determination unshaken by the stupendous difficulties of his task, and a matchless patience in dealing with the intractable material which he had to work upon. His patience and his love for the people were only thrown into stronger relief by the one occasion on which they broke down. The "meekness" of Moses, therefore, was far from being the result of a weak or timid spirit ; it was the fruit of a strong character controlled by a high ideal. He was naturally quick-tempered, prompt to speak and act, but he had learned so steadfastly to subordinate personal feeling and private interests to the sole object of his life, the fulfilment of the purpose of God, that there was no place for personal resentment, ambition, or selfishness. His highest characteristic was his faith, by which he recognised the true value of the riches of Egypt and the "reproach of Christ," by which he perceived the Divine Presence and the Divine Will, by which he yielded all but unfailing obedience to God. Through this faith he became an interpreter between God and man, a prevailing intercessor for the sins of the people, the human instrument of God's redeeming purpose. He himself was "faithful unto God in all his house." Alike in his public and his private life, he bore witness to Him who is invisible, and God bore witness to him. His highest privilege was the con-

tinual intercourse between himself and God, the secret source from which he drew strength and wisdom and inspiration. Moses was emphatically the man of God.

§ 86. CONCLUSION (Isa. xliii. 1-7 ; lxiii. 17-19 ; 1 Cor. x. 1-13).—The promise of God made to Abraham and repeated to Jacob had been fulfilled. The little one had become a thousand ; the family had grown into a great nation. It was great in more than numbers. Israel had been organised, disciplined, and matured. It had a great past to look back to, and a greater future to claim. It was now superior in energy and courage, in civilisation and character, to the older inhabitants of Canaan. Above all, it had been for two generations in the school of God ; it had felt the pressure of His hand guiding, chastising, and delivering ; it possessed and acknowledged a moral law, to which no nation upon earth could show a parallel ; in Jehovah, the Source and Giver of that Law, it recognised its Maker, its Redeemer, and its King. With all its imperfections of knowledge, with all its subsequent lapses from faith and purity, Israel was henceforth the people of God, the channel of revelation, the representative of true religion, the expectant mother of the Redeemer of the world.

Israel, however, passed through these experiences not for itself only, or for the fruit of righteousness in its own character, but also as a representative people. “These things happened unto them for examples, and were written for our admonition.” In this history we can see as through a magnifying-glass the history of every human soul that takes its

pilgrimage from the bondage of sin to the perfectness of heaven. It records the trials and privations, the judgments and deliverances which are "common to man." On the other hand, it presents on a small scale the history of the Church, the great company of the redeemed of God, in its march to the land of far distances. For it shows, as in a glass, the eternal conditions of progress, faith, and obedience, the hindrances of human wills, and the victories of Divine Grace, through which redeemed humanity moves on to the rest that remaineth for the people of God.

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